

My Windrush Story

The narrative of the life of Albert
Williams

(Written by Himself)

By
Albert Williams

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FOREWORD

CHAPTER 1

NORTHLANDS, EMSWORTH, 1962

I was born Albert Llewellyn Benoit Williams on June 10th, 1962 in Emsworth, Havant in Hampshire in the United Kingdom in a former military hospital: The Northlands.

The Northlands house was regarded as a historic building in Emsworth, that would be converted into a NHS maternity hospital in 1949, was built, “constructed of stone and flint in a restrained Victorian style by Mr Herbert Reeves in 1892.” Photographs on the Exploring Emsworth Museum website shows images of the Northlands House standing derelict before it was demolished in 1982 to accommodate the construction of the new A27 Emsworth by-pass.

BRADFORD

I don't remember much of the first six years of my life. Just snatches here and there, like clouds of vapour that suddenly appear, then as quickly disappear. For instance I can I

remember going to the [Ley Top Infant School](#), on a hill, where teachers painted Santa Claus on the school hall glass doors, and made decorations out of paper. I remember, when I fell down a flight of steps and banged my forehead on the corner of a wall requiring me to receive stitches on my forehead, the scar still visible. These memories have been with me ever since I could walk.

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CHAPTER 2

LIFE AT THE CHILDREN'S HOME -

JANUARY 1, 1969

I was introduced to a white couple at 4 La Page Street, a terraced house about 15 minutes drive from our home on Bell Dean Road, West Yorkshire I would find out during my research for this project.

The orphanage at 4 La Page Street is a 4-bed, end-terrace house, which was part of a network of homes run by the [Poor Law Unions](#) in Bradford, Yorkshire since the 1900s. According to sources, the Bradford Union ran several children's homes or what were referred to as [scattered homes](#). [Childrenshomes.org](#) has a very informative website that gives a very good idea of the approach to social care for "children who were orphaned, abandoned, impoverished, abused or in need of shelter and protection" as far back as the 16th century. For information on the Poor Law Unions a good place to start is [The Workhouse](#) – The story of an institution.

LA PAGE STREET

Today, 4 La Page stands deserted. There are no children running about, no young lives being saved from the cruel circumstances that can happen to almost anyone. My wife, Tempie and I, visited Bradford in 2009 to film a documentary. It was called Looking for Linda. We visited 4 La Page street then, and found that the occupants had been living at that address for at least 20 years. When I looked up the property recently, I found that the building, my foster home, was now up for sale since July 2018 for the asking price of £120,000.00 I thought to myself, how ironic. "If I had an extra £120,000 lying around, I could well have just bought, and establish myself in Bradford once again. *A former orphan buys former foster home!* But no, this is not the case. I spent 5 years paying off the higher purchase on our Grande Punto my, and it would take 25 years to payoff the mortgage, and who knows what other expenses would pop up. No I can't afford that, no matter how much I would have loved to. But you can buy it for me (lol)

When I saw the photos on the developer's website, I could not believe my eyes that I stumbled up this. I walked on those same steps, through the same corridors and definitely sat in that same living room.

Life at the children's home, with uncle Stuart and Aunty Frances at 4 La Page Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire was largely uneventful. Stuart and Frances Shaw were newly-wed, they were foster parents, and they were English and they were white.

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CHAPTER 3

LIFE AT THE CHILDREN'S HOME CONTINUED

As far as I can remember, besides Uncle Stuart and Aunt Frances, there were only one or two other children living at the home during the four years I lived at 4 La Page Street. I remember one girl by the name of Paula. Her surname doesn't come to mind, and another, who I remember was a little older. Her name was Denise Brewton.

My Case worker was a bearded man called Allan Hillary. They were all white, and they were friendly. On reflection, I am amazed that my young brain, my inner child, though shaken and bruised, that certain names, faces and phrases would have remained with me, even as I approach my 60th birthday.

ST PETER'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

I would soon start school at the St Peter's Catholic School on Upper Nidd Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD3 9ND. The school has since amalgamated, and is now known as the St Mary's and St Peter's Catholic Primary School. Citing the Freedom of Information act, I wrote to the school, requesting my school records as activities for the writing of the book got on the way. They replied "Due to St Peter's and St Mary's schools merging, all the documents held from prior to our requirement to hold data were passed on to the diocese." I have since contacted the Parish Secretary, a Margaret Williams who replied, "Parish registers from St Peter's Church when St Columba's and St Peter's amalgamated now known as The Parish of St Mary's, there is an entry in the Confirmation register dated 14 November 1971: Albert Williams – confirmation name Thomas More and my sponsor is E. Buckley.

Thank you for your heartfelt email. We are pleased to hear you have such wonderful memories of our school.

Emma Vasey
School Business Manager

I attended St Peter's Catholic School. It was within walking distance from the home. I have very strong memories of my attendance there. I was a keen footballer player, I loved writing. I vaguely remember Teacher Moore pinning up one of my essays for the class to read. I can't remember what it was about. I remember the school photo sessions, and the assemblies, in which a huge flip-over hymn sheet was at the front with the words of the hymns as the Head Teacher flicked over as we sang our little hearts out:

*Faith of our fathers, living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword;
O how our hearts beat high with joy
Whenever we hear that glorious Word!*

I remember, too, the cloak rooms, and the snow, lots of it. I remember the school dinners: yorkshire puddings, and semolina.

HUGHIE GREEN

4 La Page Street, while may have been uneventful, but no less memorable. My foster parents had birthday parties and gave presents at Christmas. I once received a standing punching bag, and can still smell the heavy boxing gloves. I

silently wished for a **Raleigh Chopper**. ” The Chopper bike was sold as a “must have” item and signifier of “coolness” for many children at the time,”(*Raleigh Chopper* 2020)

I watched the black and white films of the day. **Hughie Green**, for example, was very popular with his **Opportunity Knocks** shows. I remember, us sitting in the living room with banana sandwiches on tv- trays watching **Coronation Street**, **Oliver Twist**, **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang** and **Thunderbirds**. We watched **This is your life**, **Doctor Who** and **Top of the Pops**, **On the Buses** and **Randall and Hopkirk (deceased)** We also loved comic books like **Beano**. For music, we listened to **Tom Jones**, **Cilla Black** and **The Beatles**. My sports heros were **Bobby Charlton**, **Gordon Banks** and **Muhammed Ali**.

BOYS BRIGADE

I was also a bit of a street lad. I made friends with the neighbours children easily. They were Asian and white kids. We played on the cobbled streets, and played among the derelict buildings of which there were a few. Stone-throwing fights often broke out between groups of youths, and we would shield ourselves from the stones with dustbin lids. I can remember my membership in the Boys Brigade: the slick cap, the badges and the one time I went on parade. I must have been 8 or 9 years at the time. Our meetings held in the gymnasium comprised of drill sessions and Bugle and drumming lessons. Other memories of 4 La Page Street are

of us going on seaside holidays to [Scarborough](#). Aunty Frances made sure that she identified a landmark that should anyone of us get lost we should aim to get to that landmark, and the day we visited a mug factory, and watched with awe as we witnessed the machine paint the graphic on. The kind people at the factory would give us a cup each of our chosen design.

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CHAPTER 4

DOMINICA

The first time that I heard about a place called Dominica was sometime in 1972 when my foster parents broached the question as to whether I would like to go to the island. I was nine years old, and up until that moment, I had never even questioned my identity or my race for that matter. In the few six years of my life, I cannot recall any mention of the West Indies or Dominica. I knew I was Black, and that I was different from the other children I met at Ley Top Infant and Primary and St Peter's Catholic School.

I remember aunty Frances telling me, "there aren't any televisions in Dominica!" For decades I had believed that it was my decision to return to Dominica was voluntary, and that I was responsible for the consequences of direction that our lives took therefrom. I remember her saying that she hoped that whoever was assigned to take me to the airport would be a man rather than a woman, as she reasoned that a man would be more tough in dealing with extracting children for deportation than a woman would. I got the impression that she was willing to put up some resistance. There was no discussion of any relatives involved. Aunty Frances made me promise that should I ever return to the UK, that I would look for her on a programme called calendar. I gave her a golliwog

and told her that when she looks at it to remember me. My fellow students at St Peter's gave me a book called *Fascinating Facts* signed by all the students in my class. In nearly 50 years since 1972, it would have been a miracle if either gift would still exist. Time has a way of swallowing up people, places and things. Reforming, renewing replacing the old with the new, only to repeat the process over and over, and over again ad infinitum. I remember too, that I was taken on a visit to an airport where I was shown around an aircraft to prepare me for the trip. Now I have no doubt that, whether I answered yes or no would not have made the slightest difference.

WINDRUSH GENERATION

Historians estimate that some 500,000 West Indians from across the British West Indies migrated to England between 1948 and 1970 beginning with the docking HMT Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks, Essex, on June 21st, 1948.

“Some were seeking better opportunities for themselves and their children. Some came to work for a while, save money and return home. Some had been recruited because Britain was short of workers to run the transport system, postal service and hospitals,([Nationalarchives.gov.uk](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)). The Guardian remembers that 1962, was the Last of the Windrush Generation to arrive in Great Britain. “In 1962, the young photographer Howard Grey captured the last of the Windrush immigrants as they disembarked from the boat train at Waterloo station in London,”[Theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com) (2019)

In 1948, the British parliament passed the “The **British Nationality Act 1948** which effectively nationalising West Indians who had arrived becoming “Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies” (CUKC) as the national citizenship of the United Kingdom and its colonies.” According to wikipedia, “Provision was also made in certain circumstances for citizenship to be acquired by descent from a CUKC, or by registration.”

However, Between 1962 and 1971, the rights of the (CUKC) were gradually eroded due to the various pieces of legislation amendment national opposition to the increase of Commonwealth citizens. The West Indians were treated with hostility from the very arrival. The hostile environment, as it is called today, has been all pervasive in the experience of the Windrush Generation and I and my family were no different. Return to an Address of the Honourable the House of Commons dated 19 March 2020 for Windrush Lessons Learned Review Independent review by Wendy Williams, and Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 19 March 2020 found that “... the government ignored repeated warnings, and that ministers were still failing to acknowledge the extent of suffering inflicted on thousands of people who were mistakenly classified as illegal immigrants by the Home Office.”

In 2018, what has become known as the Windrush Scandal , prompted the *Windrush Lessons Learned Review*. But despite this and repeated representation by pressure groups, 13 prisoners were deported from the UK to Jamaica as recent as December 5th, 2020. Section 2.4.10 of the Wendy

Williams report — Implementing the hostile environment goes into detail of the how the conservative government tightened the noose around the windrush victims.

FUTURE POET ARRIVES AT MELVILLE HALL AIRPORT

We left the airport on Tuesday May 2nd, 1972 I don't know which airport. There are over 40 airports in the UK, of which London Gatwick is usually regarded as the hub for Caribbean bound traffic. I can't remember too much about the flight. But I do remember flight stewardess giving a small travel bag with a logbook and a lapel with British airways logo on it. My memory fails me here as to any more particulars about that first airline trip, now 48 years ago. But one thing that struck me, as the airplane came into view of Dominica, was the beauty of the island. I would capture that experience in a poem in my second booklet of poetry: One Dominica-Odes For I Beloved.

With a last change of aircraft in Antigua, my final leg of the journey to Melville Hall Airport and the beautiful Dominica.

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CHAPTER 5

BEGINNING A NEW LIFE

*...To approach your destination by air
To gaze with wonder upon the assortment
of patterned foliage,
Carpets of coconut
palms and banana leaves
transcending
steep slopes
of rugged mountains...*

Open Invitation – (Extract from One Dominica – Odes for I beloved (1985) by Ras Albert Williams

MAY 2, 1972

I open this chapter with a quote from one of my poems from my 2nd publication, *One Dominica Odes – For I Beloved.* I can still see, in my 'Far Eye', our approach to Melville Hall Airport aboard a Leeward Islands Air Transport Services aircraft 48 years ago. I can vividly remember now, as I did then, when I wrote the poem in 1985, of that spectacular sight of Dominica's rugged terrain surrounded by the blue-grey of the Atlantic and the crystal -clear Caribbean sea. It is one of the sights you will never forget to see the acres and acres of coconut and banana estates, and snaking silvery

rivers, like lizards darting here and there beneath the undergrowth.

In 1972, it was Edward Oliver Leblanc who was Dominica's Premier, and in June of that year, **Roosevelt Skerrit** was born, who would one day become Dominica's future Prime Minister, and the world's youngest prime minister in the Western Hemisphere. It was in 1972 that the students of the Mary Academy went on strike over disturbances that arose over the Afro hairstyle. Moreover, the 1972 North Atlantic Hurricane season was significantly below average that year, with only 3 hurricanes and no major hurricanes. Also in 1972, "the **road** connecting Portsmouth and Roseau was completed," and Louis Cools-Lartigue was the last **Governor of Dominica** who served from November 1967 to 3 November 1978.

Everything about Dominica is rugged. The history of Dominica is steeped in colonialism, and the aspiration of its people born out of the remembrance of the yoke of our fathers who paid the principle as enslaved labourers. Unfortunately, we the descendants are still paying the interest.

The island's volcanic past is noticeable from the rugged peaks the run throughout the length and breadth of Dominica. Mount Diablotin is its highest mountain: 4747 feet, and you can see the impact left behind from its violent volcanic eruptions from the sea bed over millions of years, in the valleys and the hills that formed as pyroclastic streams

belched from the belly of the earth, then raced down to the seas ending in sudden drops where the molten magma cooled as it interfaced with sea leaving behind the unique topography that Dominica is well known for.

The Boiling Lake, the Valley desolation and other sulphur streams and basins are reminders of this island's volcanic formation. For centuries, too, hurricanes that cross the Atlantic Ocean from off the West coast of Africa frequently impact the islands of the West Indies. In 1979 I would survive Hurricane David.

EARLY SETTLERS

Early inhabitants of the island were first the Arawaks, then the Kalinago, who for thousands of years were able to adapt themselves to Dominica's landscape and climate, and who were established on the islands when the Europeans came in the 17th Century. However, Dominica was first sighted by Spanish explorer, Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1492.

Dominica ceased to be a colony of Great Britain, when the island was granted internal, self-government in 1967 under its associated statehood status with the mother country, Great Britain after the collapse of the short-lived West Indies Federation from 1958 -1962. Dominica attained Independence on November 3rd, 1978.

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CHAPTER 6

RESEARCHING MY ANCESTORS

There is an African proverb that says, *“If we stand tall, it is because we stand on the shoulders of many ancestors.”* My parents were the descendants of Africans who were forcibly taken from the African continent, and shipped in chains across the Atlantic Ocean to be sold in the West Indies as slaves.

Research into my ancestors beyond the second generation is an on-going project. My wife Tempie, who is the resident genealogist, is helping with this. Modern research methods are also helping with the writing of my story. With the introduction of the digitization of slave records by The Centre for the [Study of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership](#); The Trans-Atlantic and Intra-American slave trade databases created by [Slave Voyages](#), and the availability of Dominica’s Slave registers by [Ancestry](#) and records from [Lloyd’s register of shipping](#) have made the task of identifying useful information by persons desirous of learning more about their heritage much easier.

Fortunately for me, since my return to England, one of the enterprises I have invested in, is the obtaining of a BSc Hons in Computing and IT, and I am presently working towards a

MSc Technology Management. The academic skills, alone that I have obtained during my eight years of study thus far, are well worth the money spent. To say the least, the tools that are available for research, and cross-checking, then converting that raw data to information and presenting it in blogs, vlogs and, E-books and other old and new media, makes this current project of mine a dream-come- true assignment.

In the 1800s, Dominica was used as a trading post for slaves to be sold to other Caribbean islands. Shipping records digitized by Slave Voyages, indicate that slave ships began arriving in Dominica as early as 1764, when the 130-ton, *Prince of Wales*, owned by John Powell, set sail from the English port of Bristol on 1-5-1763 headed for Bonny in Africa, stopping at Sao Tome before landing at an unspecified port on Dominica soil on 26-1-1764 with 350 of the 420 captured African. In this early slave voyage 70 Africans lost their lives, even before reaching Dominica. The captain of the Prince of Wales was one named Thomas Borthwick. 40 crew members survived out of 46. According to this record: Outcome of the voyage was: Delivered slaves for original owners

AFRICAN ORIGINS

When slavery was finally outlawed in 1808, the British Navy was instructed to intercept pirates who persisted with the now illegal slave trade. The last illegal voyage recoded by Slave Voyages, as it relates to Dominica, was the case of the

Portugal/Brazil flag-bearing vessel, the Voltigeur in 1837. The two-square-rigged mast, slave ship was 'captured by the British, and the 443 enslaved that survived of the 489 that were captured from an 'unspecified port' in Africa were released in the Americas. According to this entry, the 'principal place of slave landing was 'an unspecified port in Dominica.

Between 1812 and 1834 the British government and Anglo-Caribbean colonial governments registered the enslaved population to help manage the illegal movement of slaves following the abolition of the slave trade

| Caribbean roots
Dominica's population of African descent can be traced to ethnic groups in Africa such as the Bassa, Kru, Akan, Yoruba, Ewe, Fula, Kongo, Wolof and Ambundu. The regions from where most of the enslaved in Dominica originated from were: Bight of Biafra, Cameroon, Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Windward Coast, Liberia, Ghana, Congo-Brazzaville, Loango Kingdom, Angola and Benin.

THE ESTATES

The databases comprise of shipping records and planters ledgers, and memories. One of legacies for many West Indian descendants, is that most of our ancestors were born and

died in slavery. When emancipation finally came, many eked out survival how they could planting on crown land or working as labourers. Another useful resource that is now available online is the *References to the Plan of the Island of Dominica as surveyed from the Year 1765 to 1773* by John Byres. (Which can be found [here](#)). This document is a very useful tool to identify land owners in 1773 who were the slave owners and slave merchants of the day. The e-book, which accompanies the map, provides such information as the “lot number, and the name of the ‘original purchaser’, the size of the estate in acres, and the name of the owner in 1773 and any subsequent owner.

In the John Byres 1776 *Plan of the island of Dominica*, the NorthEast section covers the lot numbers and landowners in the Bense, Anse de Mai and Anse Soldat areas. Two main estate owners identified, that are of interest to me are Harry Gordon who owned 258 acres at Lot 26 in the parish of St Andrew and James Byres, who also was an early buyer of land in Dominica, who owned 168 acres on Lot 25 also in the parish of St. Andrew. I am also interested in the will of David Rainey, the owner of 250 acres at Lot 31.

With this information, we can cross-reference names and lots for any chosen area. The Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership database provides a comprehensive collection on estate ownership in British West Indies with no less than 338 Estates mentioned in 1,418 Records relating to Dominica.

I have included a number of references below, for your further reading on what life was like for Dominicans in the post-war era.

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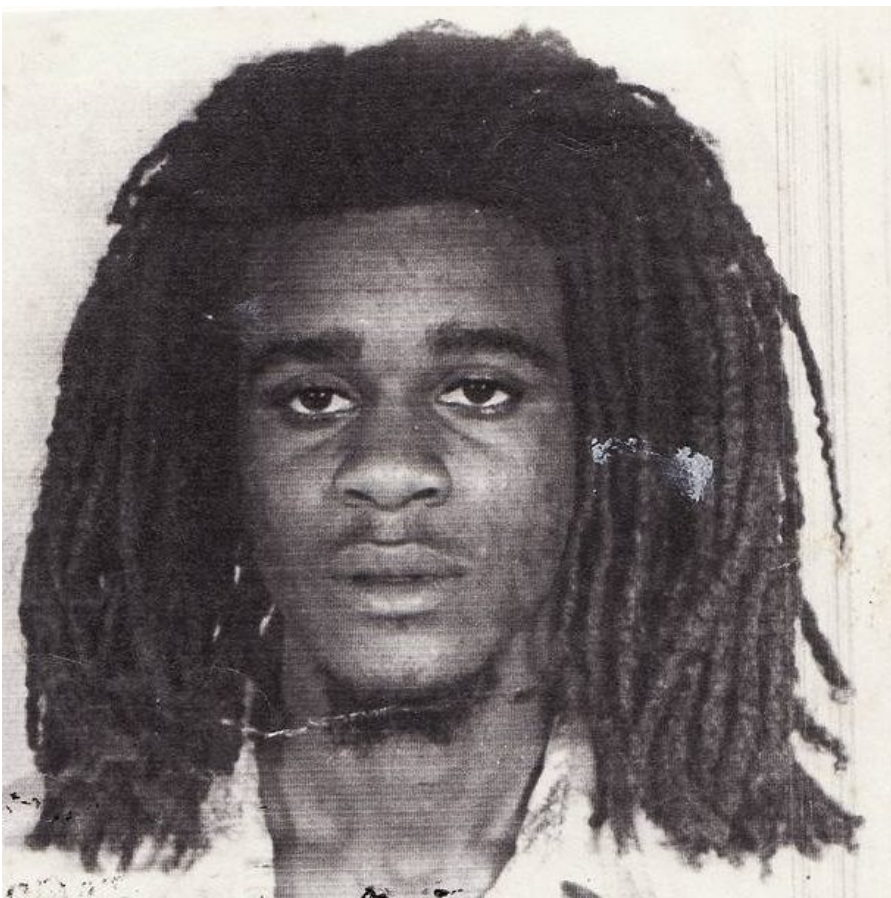
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CHAPTER 7

THE MAKING OF A POET



Ras Albert Williams (1982)

I attended the Goodwill Junior High School (GJHS). I can remember, this is where my knowledge on things Dominican was beginning to make sense. Among my school textbooks was the ubiquitous Students companion, which was a sort of handbook of all types of facts and figures relating to Caribbean life. There was information on the islands and their characteristics, and also proverbs and other tit bits.

I made a lot of friends at 'Goodwill School' as it was more popularly referred to, and for the first time was able to engage in my favorite sport of football. I remember though, that I still had not received my school uniform. At that time, the boys wore khaki short pants and a orange-ish cream shirt. I remember, one student by the name of kervin Stephenson, asked me once, "why are you not wearing the school uniform?" He seemed genuinely puzzled by this. I also remember another pupil called Daniel Lugay. We were young boys no more than 12 or 13. I would meet kervin again when I passed the common entrance exam and began my attendance at the Dominica Grammar School (DGS). Daniel Lugay, joined the police force and was killed during an ambush. But one image that has hung in my mind from that brief attendance at the GJHS, was the sight of a member of the Dominica Defence Force, dressed in full army uniform, with a rifle. From his waist hung a bayonet spike. Little did I know that Dominica was at war with the Dreads.

In 1974 tensions between the black power activists and the government began to worsen. In July Premier Edward Leblanc had stepped down, and Patrick John took over the reigns of power, and made the elimination of the 'Dread Menace' his number one priority.

A 20 -year-old, Dread, Desmond Trotter had been convicted of the shooting death of an American tourist, Albert John Jirasek on February 27 near the Fort Young Hotel. A charge he denied and his supporters claimed it was a frame-up. In yet another instance, a white Canadian couple, Dr. and were murdered and their house burnt on November 28. On November 13, 1975, the John administration passed an Act establishing a full-time Defence force and appoint John as Colonel, prompting Kelvin Francis to write in the Dominica Star issue of November 14, "Believe it or not, to put a man who has no military training as head of your armed forces is one that deserves serious criticism, thought and attention"

(Star 1975)

Naturally, my interest in the Dreads was aroused. There were stories circulating that young men were committing atrocious crimes in the hills and a state of emergency had been declared. On November 21, 1974, Governor Loius Cools-Latique assented to the passage of The Prohibited and Unlawful Societies and Associations Act, 1974 commonly referred to as the Dread Act. Many years later in 2010, I would publish, Dread, Rastafari and Ethiopia: The definitive historical report of the beginning and the rise of the Rastafari movement in the Commonwealth of Dominica in which I

conducted research into the events that were occurring at the time.

“Section 5 stated that “Any member of an unlawful association who appears in public or elsewhere wearing any uniform, badge or mode of dress or other distinguishing mark or feature or manner wearing their hair, shall be guilty of an offence, and shall be arrested without warrant by any member of the police force. Section 6 and sub-sections followed that such persons would not be entitled to granted bail, and that it was offence to aid or abet any such persons in any way. A nine month jail term for the first offence, and a maximum 2 year custodial sentence was to be imposed on any one found guilty for a subsequent conviction.”(Chapter 2 2011).

It was against this background that I went to the DGS, and about the same time that I discovered the art form of poetry, Rastafari and Dreadlocks.

DOMINICA GRAMMAR SCHOOL

At the DGS in 1974 black power and dreadism was everywhere. Afros were in style, and everyone had one. some older 4th and 5th former wore dreadlocks, and we smoked cannabis on breaks and after school. On weekends we go to the river and crush young cacao pods on stones and rub the mixture into our afros and shake it out in the river leaving our hairs in little dreads. I would nurture them, by oiling them with coconut oil and ramming them down with a bath towel before brushing them back with a brush to compact them. I had a few friends who were also transitioning into the Rastafari

thinking, and we would discuss and share information on Bob Marley who caught my attention when his all-time favorite, *No Woman No Cry* was number one on the charts everywhere, and more so because he was a dread.

I remember one afternoon, as I was going home from school at around 1pm, I noticed that some young men who I knew had locks or long plaits were now baldhead. The word was that the government was arresting anyone that had locks. It was in this period also that I began to write poetry into exercise books and I would share them with my siblings to hear what they thought. The events that took place during the Dread Act era especially the imprisonment of Desmond Trotter and the rising understanding of Rastafari through the music and lyrics of Bob Marley and the Wailers would prompt me to write most of the poems that would be published in my first book of poems, *Honourable natty Dread*, and would inform all my future writing.

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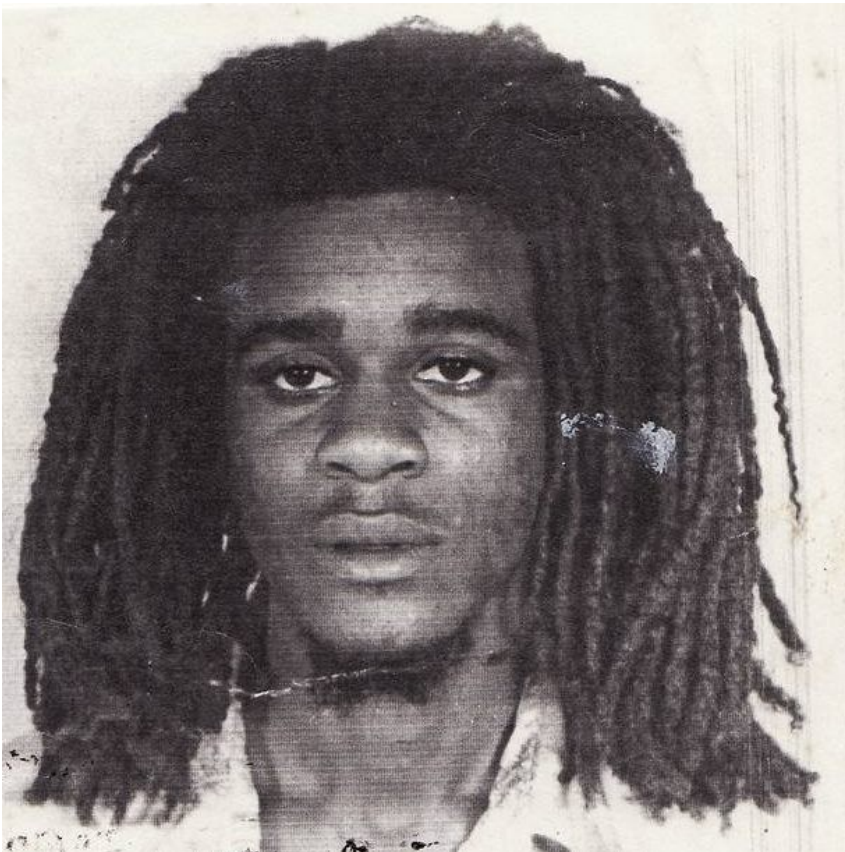
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CHAPTER 8

THE MAKING OF A POET CONTINUED



Ras Albert

Williams (1982)

In 1975 the Dominica Labour Party swept the general elections winning 16 of the 21 seats, largely based on his threat to deal with the Dreads.

At the DGS, I had two main friends who were on the same Rastafari path. As you know, you naturally gravitate to certain people in a new environment. Many things can contribute to that. Stephen John-Charles was from Salisbury, and Andre Joseph from Goodwill. At school we would reason things Rastafari and discuss the latest happenings in society in regards to the Dread Act.

Every household, in Dominica had at least one boy or girl that would represent the fledgling movement, at least in heart and mind, even though not in appearance. The Dreads were not popular, at all during the days of the Dread Act. Patrick John found the support of farmers and their families who had been threatened or worse, in their 'gardens' in the hills. Mothers cautioned their children, and many ran away to join the brothers in the hills or start their own 'vineyards in the hills of around Roseau. The barrage of attention- grabbing headlines from the *Chronicle* and the *Star* throughout the 70s and into the 80s were a constant reminders that a deep and serious division had erupted Dominican society as can be inferred from this sample list of some of the titles of the day: It was a dangerous time to be a Dread in those days.

- *Fire and Foul Play* – The Dominica Star, Nov 24, 1974
- *Shots and Chops* – The Dominica Star, Mar 1, 1974
- *Undreading the Dreads* – The new Chronicle, Oct 19, 1974
- *Dreads Come Home* – The New Chronicle, Jul 19, 1975
- *Report on the Dread Finalized* – The New Chronicle, October 11, 1975.
- *A Murderous Week* – The Dominica Star, June 13, 1975

- *Rescued* – The New Chronicle Jan 8, 1977
 - *Terrorist Leader Wounded*, The New Chronicle, Jul 18, 1981
 - *Murder charge in Honychurch slaying*, The New Chronicle Sept 19, 1981
 - *Rastas held in brethren killing*, The New Chronicle Nov 28, 1981
 - *Rasta's Body found* – The Chronicle, Dec, 1981
-

GROUNDING WITH MY BROTHERS

In 1977, Jesuit priest and author came to Dominica to promote his recently released publication *Dread*. He held talks with the government and he visited Desmond Trotter in prison at Stockfarm. He also held talks with the brethren at Terre Femme, and held a public discussion at the Goodwill Parish Hall where he showed a film: 'Everyone a rastaman' that showed Jamaican Rastafarians reasoning and smoking from chalices. I had begun to stop eating meat and and I and Andre would visit Vivian Trotter in Goodwill who had just returned from studies in Trinidad. We would spend long hours reasoning about Rastafari and I would borrow books from him to read at home. Books like the *My Life and Ethiopia Progress*: the autobiography of Haile Selassie and *The report of the Rastafari Movement in Kingston Jamaica* published in 1960.

Ras Albert Williams (left)and Andre Joseph in the early 80s

We also would visit other brethren in Giraudel and Campbell, around newtown and Fond Cole. Ball Tricks was also a UWI graduate and we would reason at his home and when the meeting was over, He would advise us to leave in twos and to straddle our exit so as not to arouse neighbours that large groups of dreads had assembled here. I wanted to seek out brethren who 'sighted up' His Imperial Majesty. As my commitment to Rastafari grew, I arranged for permission with Bernard Wilshire who the resident tutor at the Extramural for us to hold a meeting of for July 23, the birthday of Haile Selassie at the institution. A single radio announcement was made but only Andre Joseph, Errol Thomas, Qulizer Williams and myself were present.

THE 1970S DECADE OF CHAOS

In **1973** a state of emergency was called, when popular radio host Daniel papa dee Coudior was transferred from Radio Dominica to a desk job at the Ministry of Communication and Works. During that episode, members of the CSA executive were placed under house arrest. In **1974** a frequent visitor to Dominica, Albert John Jersek was shot near Fort Young. This came as Black Power activist were very vocal and held meetings at the Gardens and Four Corners in Roseau. Young militant Black Activist would eventually be convicted of murder, and this sparked international outrage from human rights organisations and trade unions. Other murders of local white residents, and visitors and attacks on locals, moved to John to pass the Prohibited and unlawful associations act of

1974 in November, and was further amended in December. Between 1974 and 1979, at least 35 Dreads were killed according to the Waitukubuli House of Nyabinghi. On **August 27, 1975**, the the Derge, who had overthrown the Ethiopian Imperial family in Ethiopia announced that Haile Selassie had died in his sleep. The local media in the Caribbean reported that “Rastafarians cannot believe that their God is dead.” When Dominica gained its independence on November 3rd, **1978**, I was in fourth Form at the DGS. I was prefect and a member of the student council. I imagine I was a cool prefect seeing that by then my brushback was bushy. Nevertheless, I drilled and led a squad of female students across the Botanic Gardens at the School’s parade. The night before, I was one of thousands that had turned out for the lowering of the Union Jack, and the raising of the Dominica National Flag at exactly midnight. I remember the fireworks. On **May 29, 1979** trouble began to brew for the John administration. It was on Kennedy Avenue, outside the Government Headquarters that protestors gathered demanding the resignation of Patrick John. John was seeking to table an anti-sedition legislation to muzzle the press. I remember the Defence force arriving, and started to fire tear gas canisters at the crowd. It was the first time that I had tasted tear gas. Later I would learn that one, Philip Timothy was shot and died later in Hospital. I remember one by one John’s cabinet resigned until John was forced out of office, and the Committee of National Salvation was formed. That year, was the final year at DGS, and I and my cousin were sitting the GSEs. While the class was settling down, a

teacher by the name of Michael Bruney, had an important announcement to make. “There are two students who have dreadlocks in the class and the headmaster [Mr. Hubert Charles] has been asked to inform you that that you will not be allowed to do the exam except you comb out your hair.” I remember, the Late Mr. Bruney telling me that “You will have lent of time to grow locks after school. How right he was. I think I brushed out my curls as best as I could. But with the holidays round the corner, I was soon locking up again. Then Hurricane David struck.

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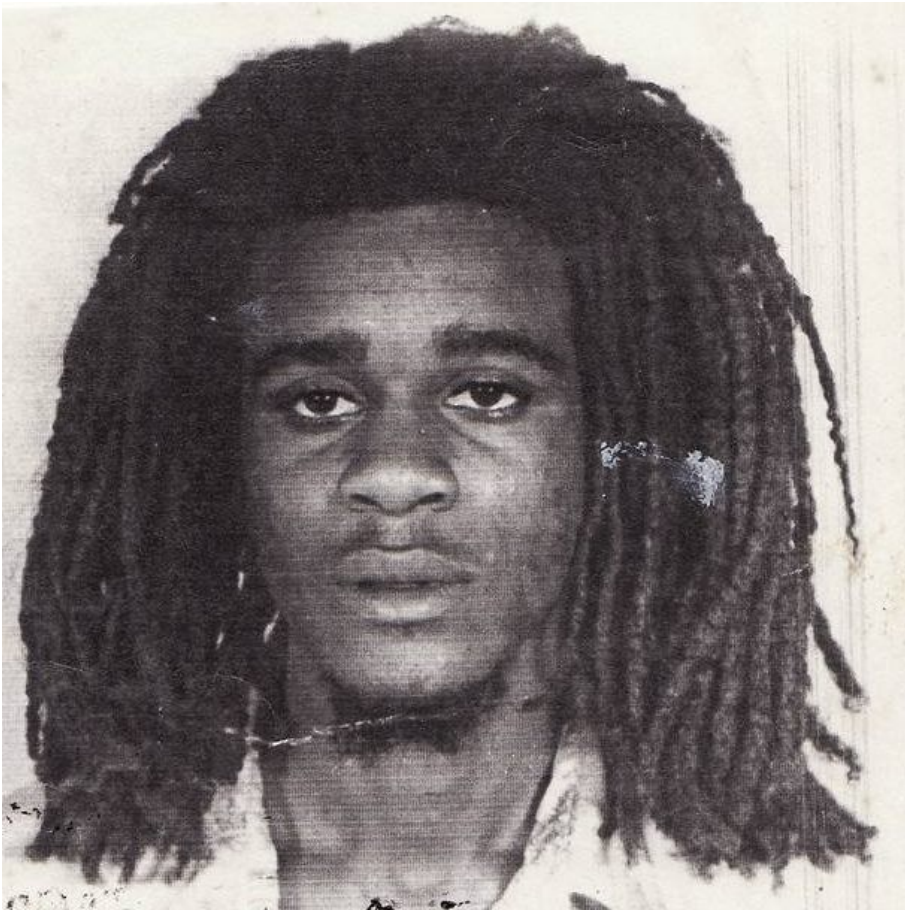
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CHAPTER 9

HONOURABLE NATTY DREAD LIVES



Ras Albert Williams (1982)

Greetings readers. If you have been reading *My Windrush Story – The narrative of the life of Albert Williams* up to this chapter, and that you are still with me, I want to thank you for taking the time off from your busy day to do so. Need I remind you, that this is not a work of fiction, but a definitive record of my life, as I remember it, and which is corroborated

by research in archival records, and further verified through the reading of extant historical texts, and in rare cases, reflections from living persons.

In Chapter 11, I continue to share my personal recollections from my life in Dominica in the early eighties.

Background

When Hurricane David struck the island on August 29, 1979, as the decade of the 1970s drew to a close, it was the Interim government, under the leadership of Oliver J Seraphin as prime minister that was in power. In the aftermath of the fall of Patrick John on May 29, when a throng, of an estimated 10,000 protestors pelted stones at the Government Headquarters, breaking windows as the John administration proceeded to debate amendments to the Libel and Slander Act. The legislation would have made it compulsory for newspaper editors to reveal their sources. John was also pushing for an amendment to the Industrial Relations Act which sought to, among other matters, to 'limit the right to strike.' According to historian, Dr. Lennox Honychurch, Seraphin was the first minister to resign from John's cabinet. When the dust settled, barrister-at-law, Jenner Armour was sworn in to replace Fred Degazon who 'fled Dominica' in June of 1979 and consequently resigned on February 1980. The Interim government held and lost the general elections of July 20, 1980 with the electorate voting in the Mary Eugenia Charles-led, Dominica Freedom Party which grabbed 17 of the 21 seats becoming, not only Dominica's, but the Caribbean's first female prime minister.

Following the constitutional crisis in May and the devastation suffered by Hurricane David in August, the rehabilitation and recovery of the island was understandably slow. I managed to secure a short-term employment with the Banana Growers Association, that had taken on extra staff to help with the *Banana Acreage Rectification Scheme*. If you know me personally, you will know that my hair grows very fast, and my two year-old dreadlocks were really starting to lengthen, and I tucked them into a pale blue tam.

Dominican residents and citizens also slowly came to terms with the destruction of their homes and infrastructure. One of the areas that sprung up as people rebuilt their lives after 'David' was an area that became known as 'Under the Galba' at Bath estate near the Teacher's Training College where youths, predominantly from Roseau, had built several shacks in the shadow of a linebreaker of Galba trees, and what was the former lime estate of L. Rose and company.

At Bath Estate I attempted to start a reggae group. I had been writing lots of songs since the 70s and I introduced a few of my tunes to Idren. We even had contact with an agent through the Late Thomas Baptiste. He had a photographer take a few photographs of us, and we prepared a cassette tape with the band playing to present to an agent in England. Nothing much came from that attempt. But the band did go on to have one memorable performance at the Grotto, when professor Oil joined us on drums; Toss played Rhythm guitar, Squibby played bass, Adi on the organ and I on guitar and lead vocals as we rocked the area with my signature tune *Honourable Natty Dread*.

Around this time too, 1979/80 I approached Elizabeth Alfred who was the Chief Youth Officer at the time and reasoned with her that the Bath Estate community, had no amenities and no where for the youth to engage and I suggested a youth group. She visited the area with a team, and in a few weeks, the Bath Estate Youth Group came into existence. Also as the 1980s began, I became friends with dreadlocked youths from the Pound area who introduced me to Henry Jno Baptiste otherwise known as Mwata.

Mwata in his prime, represented Dominica in football and Cricket, and was a formerly 2nd in command of the Stockfarm Prison. It was while he was employed at the Stockfarm Prison that his friendship with Desmond Trotter deepened which eventually led to him walking out on the service. He related to this author, that he told them that he was going on his lunch break and never came returned. In 1979, the mighty Hurricane David blew open the prison gates and demolished the cells, and Trotter and others made good their escape.

I can remember that it was during this period that my convictions towards Rastafari became more robust, and as was the custom then, there was a list of things that Dreads did not do, and did not eat and one of those things was to not work for exploiters. Since the 70s, young men and women in the prime of their lives, abandoned their posts wherever they were employed in the system, and like Mwata, took to the hills, despite the inherent danger of the police empowered by the Dread Act, to live an ascetic life dedicated

to Bible -reading, living closer to Jah and nature, planting I-tal food and marijuana.

Mwata was no exception. We met regularly in his yard in the Pound, and it was during these sessions that the Rastafari Cooperative Community, a group of young Rastas from the Goodwill area whom the Patrick John government had given a portion of land in Terre Femme, hosted a series of nyabinghi gatherings around the island, including Terre Femme that became the Mecca of Rastafri in Dominica. Also it was during those times that I Met many of the notable Dreads from all over the island including Eric Joseph, and other ultra-left-wing Dreads that would trek through the night, over hills and valleys to avoid capture by police and the vigilante groups. It was also during this time that the I-nity of Rastafari I-dren (IRI) was formed. I can remember at that Nyabinghi, there was another name on the table : Waitukubuli Association of Rastafari (WAR), but the brethren decided that W.A.R. would send the wrong message to society, especially as the movement was trying to repair its image from the the damage that had been done from firebrand dreads throughout the 70s.

1979 – RIVER CLAIRE

The following is taken from my 2010 publication Dread

Rastafari and Ethiopia

“Mwata sympathised with us youth, as we simply spent our days hanging around reasoning and going from Idren to Idren’s homes. Eventually, Mwata announced that he

had been given permission to occupy a piece of land in the River Claire area. This was the area that Mwata himself planted his crops and his ganja. He would resort to his hills, during the week, and usually came to the Babylon on weekends to purchase supplies in the market and to meet the many Idren that would come to see him. Mwata was a wise dread and very positive about the movement and His Imperial Majesty. The benefactor was a man named, Mr Kelly. A tall, red-skinned man from Goodwill, who was coming on in years and consented that Mwata occupy a savannah in the heights of River Claire. It was mutually agreed that we would bring a portion of our harvest to him whenever that was. It was about an hour and 40 minutes trek up the river, from the starting point at Palm Grove. Like the River Duce, the River Claire was one of the tributaries that emptied themselves in the Roseau River. Cephas, Ras Leroy, Ras Mickey Ras Dailey Ras Adawah I-self and Ras Mwata set off on foot before the sun had risen with our back packs, tools and foodstuffs for the first sightings of our promised land. Along precarious rocky paths, up and up the mountain path. The air very clean and fresh until we finally met a plateau on which the savannah stretched out for about five acres. The soil was sandy and had a number of coconut trees still on it, that had survived the onslaught of Hurricane David. It

was between the cool running waters of the River Claire and another stream that sprang up somewhere in the bush.

Dread Rastafari and Ethiopia **Chapter 3** (2010)

1981 – MARIJUANA IS THE TREE OF LIFE

In **January of 1981**, I approached the editor of the New Chronicle with the script of an epistle that I had written, which was a response to Joseph Owen's '*Dread*'. It was a long document, about 6 or 7 pages long. I had distributed it to a few friend, and I decided that I should share this with a larger audience. I met the editor, a Mr. Joey Vanterpool who looked at me, looked at my script and told me that he would look at it, not before telling me that "a few weeks ago, I would have been in the hills shooting people like you."

I was first alerted that the article it had been printed when while walking in Roseau someone told me that they had seen my name in the newspaper. Sure enough, Mr. Vanterpool had condensed my paper, and published it as a debate, with one side reading, Marijuana is the Tree of Life, and the other Marijuana is not the Tree of Life by Joey Vanterpool.

1981 – TROUBLE IN GOMMIER

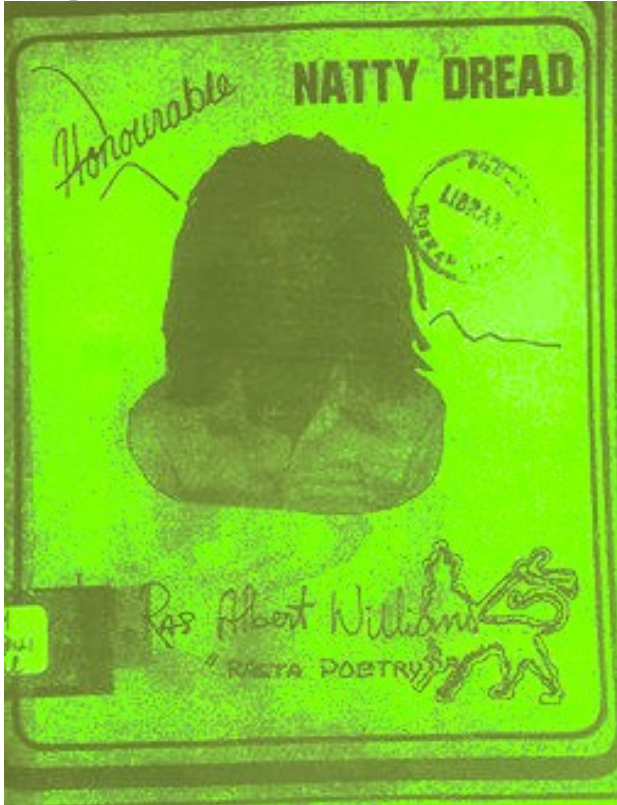
According to Lennox Honychurch, A cooperative shop run by Lennox's father, Ted Honeychurch was burgled, and on **February 12, 1981**, the special squad of the Dominica police raided a dread camp in the heights of Gomier which resulted in the shooting dead of two Dreads. Honychurch

writing in the *The Dominica Story*, page 277 wrote that members of the Defence Force and the Dreads were seen “making frequent visits to the house of the late Eustace Francis. “On that same day, the Dreads dressed in army green fatigues and armed with .303 rifles and SLR machine guns,” wrote Honychurch, kidnapped Ted Honychurch, his wife, cook and gardener, and killed his pet parrot and dog, and set the family home ablaze . “The kidnappers under the leadership of Pokosion, (Leroy Etienne) marched their captives cross-country down into the valley at Beline,” Honychurch wrote.

March 7, 1981, The Eugenia Charles announced that a plot to overthrow the government had been foiled and on December 19, 1981 a second coup attempt was made. Masked men tried to capture the police headquarters on Bath Road, Roseau, and simultaneously stormed the Stockfarm Prison where Patrick John was serving a 12-year- sentence for his part in what has become to be known as the Operation Red Dog. Stewart Bell a journalist would write about this affair, in his book *Bayou of Pigs* that this was an unlikely alliance of Canadian, Klu Klux Klan mercenaries, dreads, disgruntled defence force soldiers who were caught red-handed by 100 federal and State agents that intercepted the ring leaders as they attempted to set off by boat from New Orleans. (Honychurch 1995, pg 281)

1982 – I BECAME A PUBLISHED POET

You were the first Dread to be interviewed for radio



First publication

On **May 11, 1981**, Bob Marley died. I can remember, I had just come down from the hills, and as was usually, I visited Mwata at his yard in Pound. He was alone and he was listening to the radio as radio stations played Bob Marley music, and related the information that the reggae singer had passed away in the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Miami in the US on his way to Jamaica. He had been receiving medical treatment from a specialists in Germany, but was told that there was nothing more that medical science could do for him. “Shortly before his death, Marley had received the Order of Merit from the Jamaican government. He had also been awarded the Medal of Peace from the United Nations in 1980.”

I can remember the reasoning I had with Mwata. He said, “Look at the significance of the man.” You have to remember that since 1975, Bob Marley had captured the world’s imagination, especially in the wake of his well received Lyceum Theatre concert in London from which the single *No woman No Cry* was number one in the charts almost everywhere. a few years ago, I discovered that prior to the selfsame concert, an announcement was made that a ‘Free Desmond Trotter meeting was to be held in the area. Bob became a spokesman for the downtrodden, for Rastafari, and for the the Third World on a whole. I myself was particularly sorrowed by his passing. As I related earlier, I was a big Marley fan. In December of 1981, I wrote Honourable Natty Dread as a song in tribute to Bob. I decided later, that I would select the lyrics of this song, and 9 other poems/songs and publish it as a tribute. I began the process, and went to the Tropical Printers with my handwritten script and asked Mr Monroe, who was incharge there, how much would it cost to print.

I asked a neighbour of mine, Merle Lawrence to type it for me, and I asked Ras algi if he could draw some illustrations for me. It was Ras Algi that encouraged me to make use of the Rasta ‘I and I’ language, and told me that instead of putting a photograph of Bob Marley on the cover, I should use a photo of myself as Bob Marley was dead. So I went off to photo One, and met Annie Richards, who took the only photograph of myself that has survived from that era. As mentioned, Ras Algi and I were members of ‘Group I’, and after Hurricane David in 1979, he and Gregs opened the first

School to be operational. It was an informal preschool. He said that he wanted to provide the children with somewhere to go as the country tried to get back on its feet. I and Andre would look after the school for him for a few weeks when he went overseas for a while. I gave him the plain text typed by Merle and he worked on the illustrations. When it was finished, I returned to Tropical Printers with the revised manuscript. "You again?" Mr. Monroe exclaimed, but he took the manuscript and later told me that it would cost \$300.00 for 150 copies of the book. I didn't have two quarters to rub together. I was about 20-years-old, I was a high school graduate who left school and went straight to the hills, and I was faced with the cost of my first publication.

I decided to approach the small Projects Assistance Team run by Ron Green. In a meeting with him, he told me that I should speak with Lennox Honychurch about publishing, and that he would consult with his board. When I returned for an answer, he told me that his board had decided to give priority to someone who wanted to set up chicken rearing business. I was undeterred. I decided I would fund my publication through soliciting advertisements. I finally was able to secure funding from the division of culture who by that time was run by the former DGS headteacher, Alwin Bully as Chief Cultural Officer, who donated \$150.00 to the project. A further \$150.00 was raised from Eric's Bakery which was run by, fellow schoolmate, Neva Shillingford. I literally gave away two half-page back cover ads to Marcus Children Leather Crafts in Bath Estate, and to Ras Apries I-tal shop on Turkey lane. Ras Apries, as the first Rastaman to open an Rasta

restaurant in Roseau. Mr Monroe called my manuscript a 'magazine.'

When ***Honourable Natty Dread*** was finally printed Ras Algi said, "it's a success" I launched it at the African Liberation Day activities that were held that year at Harlem Jam city in Newton. I began a round of radio interviews on Radio Dominica which by now had been renamed, DBS Radio. I can remember at least two interviews. I granted a pre-recorded interview with Giftus John, who was a youth Officer. at the Youth division office in Goodwill. I remember the Late Ava Roach, also a youth officer, who critiqued my reading of my poems and said, I needed to put more expression in my reading. I can also remember when I went to DBS, there was a tussle between Michael Peter and Steinberg Henry to interview me. I finally was interviewed by Steinberg. The first thing he asked me before the live event was, "what are we going to talk about?" We decided on an outline of how the interview would run. I can also remember that he had a problem with a line from the final poem, *I time is up* that read, "Cause I've got to go where the sun is shining."

Rasta Truth and Rights

I can remember that it was Bobby Frederick, who met me later that told me that he saw a copy of my book in Canada. He told me that he had been a participant at the "1st International conference of Rastafari held in Canada, Toronto between 23rd-25th July", and he showed me a conference publication named *Rasta Truths and Rights* in which the entire publication of Honorable Natty Dread was included. I was pleased, although no one had asked for permission, or

even contacted me about the conference, the book or anything for that matter. I would henceforth take an active interest in copyright matters from that time, and in 1985, I would write to Alwin Bully expressing my opinion that the Dominican Copyright Act of 1911 was outdated.

AUGUST 23, 1982 – RUMOURS

As this subheading indicates, it was on **August 23, 1982** that I had a visit from two of my brethren from Bath Estate, Andre, who I have already introduced, and another Ras Leroy, who both came up to River Claire to tell me that rumours were circulating in Roseau that I had been murdered by the Police. This incident, like many episodes in my life, became the subject of a song I wrote called *Rumours*. suffice it is to end this chapter, that my brethren accompanied me back to town where I went to Alwin Bully's home on Hillsborough Street, Roseau, to ask him if he could put an announcement on the radio that I was not dead and that I was in fact very much alive. He too had heard the rumours, and in his capacity as the Chief Cultural Officer, placed the announcement on DBS Radio, putting the rumours to rest.

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By Eddie Mallin

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CHAPTER 10

DOMINICA POET



Poet and author, Ras Albert Williams – 1985

The article published the New Chronicle in 1981, and my first publication in 1982 were the beginnings of a new chapter in my life, as far as carving a new identity for myself, in country that I had arrived in only ten years ago. In Chapter 12, I continue to trawl over the archives of my life between the

years of 1982 to 1985 growing up in Dominica, which was characterised by my activities to launch my first publication and becoming co-founder of the Frontline Bookstore and the Dominica Writers Guild. I also look at my employment with the Economic and Statistics Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture. In June of

1983

I was still living in the hills by the end of 1982. I can remember that I used to live in a small shack on the edge our garden at River Claire. The land Mwata had given us was worked by several of us from Kennedy Avenue some of which would come up in the morning, then leave later in the evening. By the time the book was printed, I was living full-time in the hills. I had graduated from 'Rasta Pwe Kay' to almost 'Nonm Te' (minus the grass skirt). (Salter 2000) in his paper, 'Shooting Dreads on Sight,' identified three types of Dreads in Dominica during the days of the Dread Act: The 'Nonm Te', 'Nonm GCE' and 'Rasta Pwe Kay'. Slater explains that in 1977 when the Patrick John administration donated some land at Terre Femme to Rastafarians, who formed the Rastafari Cooperative community, it was supposed to be for all Dreads. He said that "it soon became apparent that the division of labour at the commune was unequal. It was divided along class and status lines. Nonm Te (Men of the earth), he wrote "had not gone to secondary school, but they possessed valuable knowledge of farming and peasant traditions." The Nonm GCE, he said, "referred to men who had the secondary school qualification — GCE. They tended

to be from high-standing families...” and Rasta pwe kay (Rastas that who stayed close to home) (Salter 2000).

The 28-page, Didier Report on the findings of of the Committee appointed by the government in 1975 to look into the origins and causes of Dreadism, and to make recommendations for the solution of the Dread problem, also identified three distinct groups of Dreads in its findings viz: ‘A true peaceful counter-culture group; political activists and the criminal element.

I can remember seeing two Dreads, who lived higher up River Claire, who fell into the Nonm Te category. They wore grass skirts and walked barefooted. They did not walk up the track along the river as we did. They hopped from boulder to boulder up the river itself, avoiding at all cost the path, which to them was contaminated from shoes bringing up impurities from the babylon. I remember one late night, while I was meditating in my shack, I heard a movement. When I looked, I saw the physical profile of a ‘Dread’. He was dressed in what looked like army green shorts and shirt, and he had a rifle slung across his shoulder. He me asked what was my name. I told him, and he gave some marijuana. And almost as suddenly as he had appeared left the same way he came along the river.

In another memory, I can recall, and early morning being woken up by a squad of heavily armed police, led by one Inspector Bannis. He asked me, ‘who is your mother?’ I told him that he wouldn’t know her.

Inspector Bannis looked on the roof of my little shack and saw a tray of marijuana seedlings. He said, “Do you know

how many years jail you could get for that?” He shook his head and walked off, leading his men all dressed in ‘uniforms of brutality’ in single file towards the house of Ras Mickey. The last two officers plucked the seedlings out from the try and put it in a bag. At Ras Mickey’s shack they searched it and found nothing and proceeded to burn it to the ground. One officer found my book, *Fascinating Facts* that I had borrowed to Ras Mickey. You recall that it had been given to me by students in England before I left. The officer asked me if it was mine. I said yes and he gave to me. And Inspector Bannis told us to leave River Claire.

Number chapter 6, is one of the Biblical texts that Rastafarians quote as divine instruction to cultivate the matted hair. But the dreads were stubborn. So I buried, the half-burnt hair under a kitchen where my grandmother was staying by my cousin Vander. It was 1983, and I remember referring *1983 as: the Year the Power of the Trinity*.

I can remember, that when I went back to Roseau, it was quite a shock. for everyone. One brother lamented, that, “he just published a book, and he cutting his natties!” Yet another in River Claire said, “you’re not Rastafari anymore.” the late Mickey Bruney, the former DGS teacher was now the announcer at DBS Radio who was about to interview me said, “coming up we’re speaking with a new, ball-head Ras Albert Williams.” since 1981, I had become a regular on radio programmes on DBS Radio. In the 70s, I assisted with the production of *Rastafari Revelation*, a 15-minute slot on Saturdays during which the Rastafari Cooperative Community (RCC) shared news, views and interviews on

Rastafari doctrine, and statements calling for the end of the Dread Act and elimination of police brutality among other issues.

Dreads cutting locks, although frowned upon by fellow Dreads, was a common enough occurrence in Dominica since the Dread Act. Indeed some youths were termed 'weekend dreads' because on weekends they would locks up their hair and comb it out or brush it back by Monday morning for school or work. One often heard remarked that Dominican Rastas always had short locks, while in the other islands, because there was no Dread Act legislation, the brothers and sisters were allowed to grow their dreads long and matted. Mwata himself was begged by relatives to cut his dreadlocks at second wave of persecution in 1977 for fear of his life. The Ted Honychurch affair had reignited old fault lines, and the police were looking for blood.

LOBBYING FOR UPDATE OF COPYRIGHT LAW

One of the first moves I made after *Honourable Natty Dread* was launched in 1982 was to have a discussion with Alwin Bully, the Chief Cultural Officer on the question of copyrights in Dominica. I became acutely aware of intellectual property ownership, when I had been alerted that my whole publication was included in the conference papers of the *First International Rastafarian Conference held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada 24-25 July 1982* called, *Rasta Truth and Rights*. *Honourable Natty Dread* was a slim publication of

only 12 pages. The contents were the song lyrics of five songs , and 5 poems that I had written in the 70s, including the song Honourable Natty Dread which I wrote a month after Bob Marley passed away in may of 1981. I had included a photo of Bob Marley I found in a newspaper, and the book was written as a tribute to bob Marley. It also included a poem in tribute to Desmond Trotter.

Bully told me that a traditional way of copyrighting your work was to post 2 copies to yourself. I continued to do my research and contacted the Library of Congress in Washington USA, who sent me a large packet of pamphlets on all aspects of intellectual property in the US, which prompted me to conduct research the copyright law in Dominica which I found was the Copyright Act of 1919.

Dominica has since then become a member of the World Trade Organization on 1 January 1995 and signed on to the Berne Convention on 7 August 1999. In 2003, parliament passed the Copyright Act 2003 (Act 5 of 2003) bringing the country in line with other members of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

A few weeks later, Alwin invited me to give a 20-minute presentation at a symposium held at the Old Mill Cultural Center. At that symposium, were several other speakers who presented papers on subjects such as Photography by my Kennedy Avenue neighbour, Dinsdale Lawrence. A follow up symposium was held in August of 1985, featuring, barrister-at-law, Justin Simon of Antigua, to which I was invited to give

introductory remarks. At both symposia, I stressed that the law as it stood was antiquated and needed updating.

FRONTLINE BOOKSTORE

I can remember the morning I went to collect the freshly-printed 150 copies of Honourable Natty Dread from Tropical Printers. They were located at the top of Constitution Hill. I had a shoulder bag and a few idren from Bath Estate. I donated 5 copies to the public library, and gave a copies to relatives and friends around Roseau prompting one of the I-dren to say, “look, Albies giving away books!” I also went to Bense. That night, my father read aloud the whole book. In the months after my book was published, I was introduced to a young man called Eddie Toulon. Toulon had just returned to Dominica after studying in England and he was on the ground seeking persons to help him establish a cooperative bookstore to sell African-centric books.

I was on the early membership meetings, and among those who were the founding members when the group was granted cooperative status. Biographer and author, Irving Andre would later record in his groundbreaking *Distant Voices: The Genesis of an Indigenous Literature in Dominica*, that, “the founders of frontline were largely persons united by a love of writing and a shared progressive vision of the island.” He mentioned that Christian had won two National essay competitions in the 1980s and was responsible for the revival of the Dominica Grammar School’s Literary Club while he was a teacher there and was responsible for the group

publishing a booklet of short stories and poems called *Little Sparks Literary Club*. Toulon he wrote would become the bookstore manager had begun writing poetry from age 11, and had also published a slim book of poems, adding, "The other founders, Sonny Felix, bobby Lewis and Ras Albert Williams, had all published individual works of poetry and had garnered varying degrees of critical acclaim for their works." I can remember Sony welcoming me to the group by saying, "you are one of us now." That was in 1982. Frontline opened in a wooden house on Queen Mary Street selling black conscious books, and later specialized in importing school textbooks. Frontline expanded as the years went on into providing photographic and music services, and also produced two anthologies of poetry: *Rampart 1* – *As we aspire*, (1987) and *Rampart 2* – *As we ponder*(1988). It was Eddie, also known as Izar that introduced the concept of Kawanaza to us, and I can remember at least one occasion we had a Kwanzaa celebration at his home in Canefield. Visiting Frontline was a must for any progressive of the 27 years it existed. Frontline would evolve into a full-blown concert promoter when Eddie brought to Dominica a long list of reggae acts from Jamaica and England including Ziggy Marley, Maxi Priest and Steel Pulse. Frontline would eventually purchase the property, and built the quaint little shop that it was before its ran into financial troubles. After 27 years in existence Frontline Cooperative Bookstore closed its doors on Saturday, *September 26, 2009*.

DOMINICA WRITERS GUILD

In 1982 I was invited to join the Dominica Writers Guild (DWG) by my school mate and fellow author, Ian Jackson, who had also just published a book of poems called, *Of Thoughts Confusing*. I was still living in the hills, and I would alternate between being up in River Claire and living in a little shack 'under the Galba' at Bath Estate. The Guild as far as I know, was the brainchild of co-authors of *Two Heads*, Anthony Lockhart and Arundel Thomas. Lockhart was the principal at the Dominica Grammar School (DGS) and Thomas was an English Teacher. I could remember that in school, made around third form, their book *Two Heads* was one of the texts used in literature along with *A Brighter Sun* and other texts.

The membership of Dominica Writers Guild from 1982 to 1983 grew steadily. Everyone who was culturally sensitive dropped in at one point or another on our meetings, new booklets of poetry were been published, and the guild collaborated with the Division of Culture to stage numerous poetry readings and workshops. In the first elections of executive members in 1983, Sobers Esprit was elected President and I served as Vice-president. Throughout my involvement with the guild I would serve as secretary in 1996 and again as vice-president in 1997. (Incidentally, in the 90 and early 2000s I would serve as secretary of the Ethiopia World Federation Incorporated (EWF inc) and Media workers Association of Dominica (MWAD). In 1984, the guild staged the first National Poetry Festival followed by the 2nd in 1985

during the Independence day celebrations. Also in May of 1985, the guild supported the launching of my 2nd book of poems, *One Dominica Odes for I beloved*. I can remember that it coincided with International Year of the Youth.

I can remember the event took place at night on the grounds of the Public Library on Victoria Street. A stage was set up on the DBS Sales Office verandah, and was carried live by DBS Radio. I took the opportunity to play my guitar and to sing, *I Beloved and I* from *One Dominica Odes for I beloved*, and *Lonesome Feeling* from *Honourable Natty Dread*.

In later chapters, I share more of my involvement with DWG which stretches from 1982 to 2004 when I Left Dominica for the United kingdom

DOMINICA POET

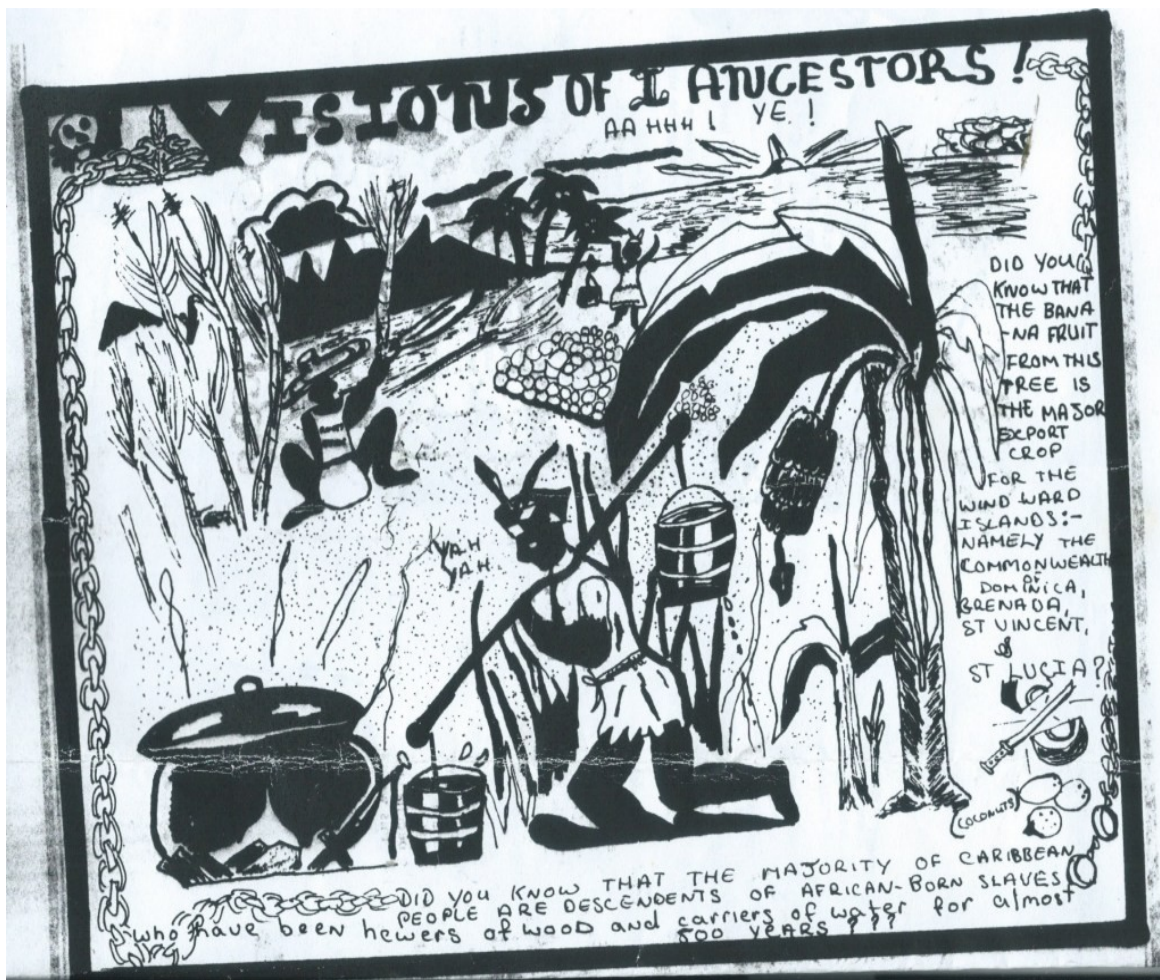
” Poems in this collection reflect a deep and burning love for Dominica and a willingness to work towards the complete development of this country.

Ras Albert Williams is an individual whose patriotism is seen in his entire lifestyle, and this is clearly demonstrated in all of the varying moods and topics of the poems.

Read and feel at one with the spirit of this publication.”

Alwin Bully – Chief Cultural Officer

I had taught myself to type as best as I could on a portable typewriter that I had borrowed from a fellow guild member, and I drew all of the illustrations and designs.



Visions of I ancestors – illustration by Ras Albert Williams

I can remember, that the idea of a magazine was rooted in my mind, and much of the funding was raised from selling advertisement space. The manuscript was 8 by 11 inches, and I can remember Sister Nats was disappointed when the book was finally published as she said, it looked better in the larger edition. Alwin Bully, who is the designer of the Dominica National Flag, and lists 'advisor to the Dominica Writers Guild in 1982' among his list of achievements, wrote the introduction to *One Dominica – Odes for I beloved.*

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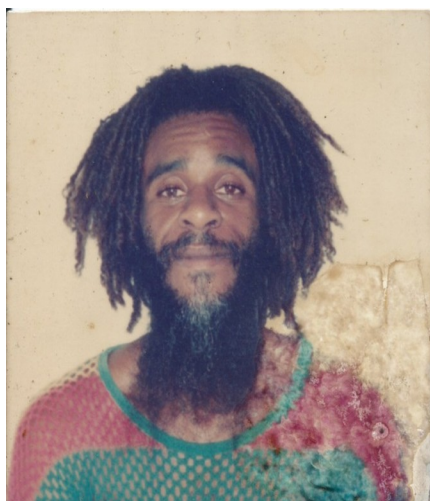
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CHAPTER 11

JOURNEY THROUGH THE 90S



In my absence from the Roseau scene from 1986 to 1990, the groups and organisations that I had co-founded and or witnessed their fledgling steps into the cultural landscape, had continued to function. I was 27 years old when I arrived back in Roseau, without a plan, and without a home to go to. Mwata put me up at the newly-founded, Ethiopian World Federation's headquarters on Potters Street.

While I was away, the Inity of Rastafarian Idren formed in the early 80s, had evolved into the Empress Zauditu Chapter of the Ethiopian World Federation Incorporated. Desmond 'Kabinda' Trotter, who had been spearheading activities in the region for stronger centralisation in the 80s had repatriated to Ethiopia, and the EWF, complete with a constitution and elected officers was installed. Mwata, who was the president brought me to I mani and told him that "the brother needs a place to rest."

The Ethiopian World Federation is a Black Organisation. A non-governmental organisation established in 1937 in the United States to bolster worldwide support of the Imperial family to expel the Italian fascists during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia from 1935 – 41. In 1948 when the Italian occupation was crushed, after the return of His Imperial Majesty to Ethiopia he donated 200 hectares in Ethiopia to Africans abroad who had supported him at Shashamane. This became known as The Land Grant, and returnees from the diaspora including Dominica's Desmond Trotter known as Kabinda.

The HQ was inspiring! On the walls were posters of His Imperial Majesty. A small library held books on African liberation struggle. There books and more posters on Nelson and Winnie Mandela, books about Ethiopia and other Rastafarian subjects, even a book called The Upanishads. I was elected to serve as Sergeant-at-Arms, because since I had been allowed to live in a room at the back of HQ, I could also be in charge of keeping the meeting area in order. As well as to maintain order at meetings. When the time came for fresh elections of officers, Mwata, who was the first person to suggest that I write a book about myself, suggested to me that I could be president of the EWF. He told me that all correspondence would pass before me and that I would chair the meetings and so on. Providently, I did not accept, but I accepted that I could become the secretary. Bernard Shaw, otherwise known as Ras Imani was elected president and I was voted to serve as secretary. The outgoing secretary, Nathalie Charles (sister Nats) walked me through

the basic parliamentary jargon and terminology. For example, *“the first item on the agenda was taken up for discussion.”* And how to write up minutes and prepare them for the next meeting and so on. Her advice would serve me well in future secretary stints in the writers guild, as well serving as secretary of as the Media Workers Association of Dominica (MWAD) much later in 2002/03.

I remember that it was during my tenure as secretary, that when I saw that the newspaper committee was still considering to use a gestetner machine to print a newsletter, I suggested that we should use tropical printers. Using my experience of printing two books with them, the process was easy — just prepare the manuscript, choose your paper type and ink colour etc, and let them produce a professional product. It was agreed. Nevertheless, the typewriter and the gestetner machine were rudimentary machine of the early black power struggle. I had used them in the early days, and it could be messy, and one had to manually spin the contraption by hand to spit out the printed text. Drawings had to be done on stencil.

I also participated in fundraising activities of the EWF and I also worked at the Shashamane bar and restaurant, an establishment on the River Bank run by sister Nats. I learned how to make fruit cakes and juices and banana bread working with Michael and others. Again, when I noticed that the EWF were hiring an third party to make cakes for us to sell at fundraising activities, I suggested that we could cut costs by doing the mixing ourselves and only pay for the oven services.

A three-part-article on the history of the Rastafari movement in Dominica: Dread Rastafari and Ethiopia – 1991

In 1991, while secretary of the EWF, I had a major journalistic break through, when I arranged with Editor of the Chronicle to print a three-part-article on the history of the Rastafari movement in Dominica: Dread Rastafari and Ethiopia. It was my first paid assignment for which I received \$50.00 each. In 2010, I would published a hardback extended edition of the articles under the same name. And this work is still evolving. I would represent the local chapter at a regional EWF convention held over a weekend in Guadeloupe in 1996. Rastafarian elder, Jah Eliejah Adanjah and his family and followers were the hosts.

GUILD ON THE MOVE

In 1990, The Frontline Book store and the Dominica Writers Guild were still around. Frontline was thriving, but the Guild was on a low profile. The spirit came unto me, as a Bob Marley devotee, to mark the ninth anniversary of the death of Bob Marley. I discussed my idea with Harry Sealey who was the manager of Frontline, and Sobers Esprit, a former president of the Dominica Writers Guild. They were very receptive. A tentative outline of literary activities was drawn up, and Sobers offered to speak with the late Loftus Emmanuel, an entertainment promoter from New Town to organise a concert in his famed, Harlem Jam City. I had met Loftus on several occasions during the staging of African

Liberation day activities in the late 1980s organised by the Inity of Rastafari Idren under the able-leadership of Henry 'Mwata' John Baptiste. Loftus was known for partnering with Eddie Toulon to bring reggae acts to the island.

Plans for the observance of the 9th anniversary of the death of Bob Marley were announced on DBS Radio and the Chronicle on April 25. We published poems in Tribute to Bob in the Chronicle and made appearances on radio programmes to promote our tentative programme.

May 11 was a friday. According to the New Chronicle of May 18, 1990, "The day began with a Bob Marley memorial sale at record shops and bookstores. At noon, I addressed the students and staff at the Dominica Grammar School's closing ceremony for 5th formers. "Ras Williams called on the students to consider careers in the cultural industry, the release said, adding, "We recognise the need to train young people to be cultural workers as the Awin Bullys, the Gordon Hendersons, the Pearle Christians, the Sobers Esprits, and others will eventually have move on to more challenging horizons which necessitates the recruitment of a younger crop of cultural organisers."

In the evening, the 'Homage to Bob Marley took place at the Harlem Jam City on High Street, Newtown. A reasonable crowd were there to appreciate the talents of groups like: Four Wings Roots, Stems and Branches, Travilia and Flintstones. Solo acts included Tony, Ras Mo Matthew Luke , elsa Proctor, Tipper Tino, Prince Ital Joe and myself. I can remember, I rehearsed with Flintstones at Bath Estate. Edwin 'Roots' Harris was the drummer, and we practiced my

signature tune, *Honourable Natty Dread* and Bob Marley's *Positive Vibration*. The master of ceremonies was school mate, Barrett Alexander. Also in the audience was Department Editor, Terry Larson from the *Reggae Report*. She presented copies of the recent edition of the magazine to musicians and expressed interest in receiving poems in tribute to Bob Marley for inclusion in a subsequent edition. In 1991, we would stage the 10th anniversary, this time at the Old Market Plaza.

I had struck up an arrangement with Marcia Dublin of the Movement for Cultural Awareness who had an office on Independence street. She offered me artistic and organisational support. I had a desk and access to telephone and other facilities, and the MCA would be the supporting organisation for this Bob Marley anniversary concert on May 11.

The MCA would also be the supporting organisation for the African Liberation Day activities I organised for May 25, 1994. Nelson Mandela, the South African lawyer, turned freedom fighter and campaigner against the brutal apartheid system was released from prison on February 11, 1990 after 27 years of incarceration. And in 1994, the African National Congress won South 'Africa's first election by universal suffrage' in 1994. Mandela became South Africa's first Black president.

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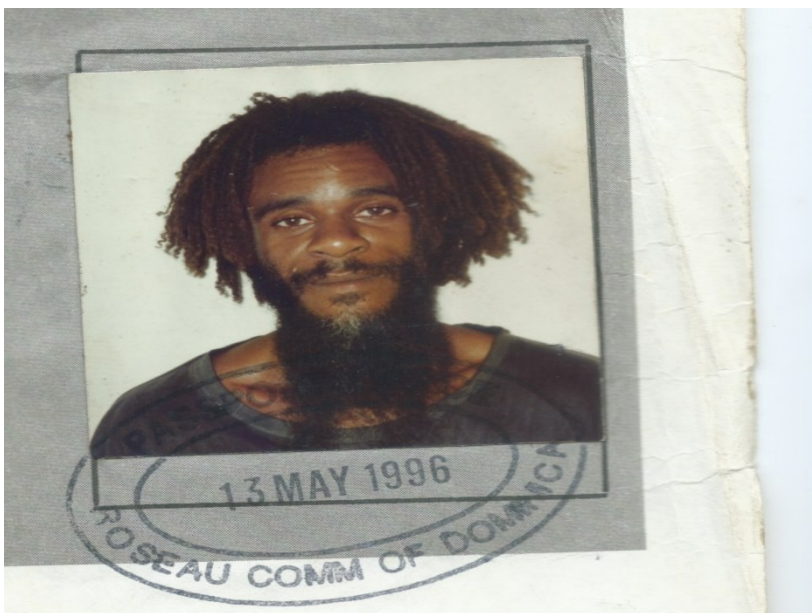
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CHAPTER 12

JOURNEY THROUGH THE 90S CONTINUES

In 1997, I was nominated for the DBS Radio FAME Award for Best Radio Program for the one-hour, literary radio program.

Ras Albert Williams



Ras Albert Williams (1996)

In Chapter 11, I began to share selected extracts from my life in Dominica in the **1990s**, as the reading of My Windrush Story – The narrative of the life of Albert Williams (Written by himself) continues.

The Dominica Writers Guild (DWG) which was founded in 1982, by Anthony Lockhart and Arundell Thomas in the staff room of the Dominica Grammar School, had experienced a lull in activity from 1985 to 1990. Around 1986 I had dropped out from the limelight and gone to live in the country. An article appearing in the Wednesday, July 1995, edition of the 2-year-old weekly, Tropical Star said, “The group started in 1982, but ceased to exist by 1985 not having put together a constitution. A rejuvenation was attempted in 1991 with a number activities taking place since then, “the paper said. In **1991**, the Guild staged the 10th anniversary of the death of Bob Marley with a concert at the Old Market plaza. Duties of master of ceremonies fell on yours truly, and we promoted the event with all the usual media promotion. We published tributes to Bob in the papers; gave interviews to the radio station and published the 2nd edition of Honourable Natty Dread. The guild also partnered with proprietor of Cafe Des Arts, a new mini theatre set up playwright Nigel Francis on Federation Drive, Goodwill.

Ian Jackson and Harry Sealey teamed up to produce a production called, ‘*Dem So*’ on October 11th and 12th. I would perform as a guest at this function and on October 16th, I also performed a few pieces as a guest on Amorette Charles solo musical performance. In **1991**, I also had my three-part-article, Dread Rastafari and Ethiopia the New Chronicle published.

AFRICAN LIBERATION DAY – 1994

In **1994**, under the auspices of the Movement for Cultural Awareness (MCA) I organised **African Liberation Day** (ALD). It was more a week event than a day of celebration. We created the Black History Awareness committee, made up of representatives of MCA, the DWG, Cultural Division Small Projects Assistance Team (SPAT), the Rastafari community and others. The apartheid system was abolished in South Africa in 1991, and then the first democratic, general elections were held in South Africa between 26 and 29 April in 1994. The National African Congress (ANC) was swept to power ending decades of white-minority rule, and Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first Black President. He served for one term and retired in 1999. We applied for permission, and organised an ALD march from the Pottersville Savannah to the Peebles Park on Victoria Street where we held a concert of various artists and poets and speakers. We organised a panel discussion on Marpin's What-a-bout, featuring Ron Green, Athie Martin, Jean Finucane and myself, and was hosted by show's Lennox Linton. A similar discussion was held on DBS with a different panel.

In June, I published the third edition of *Honourable Natty Dread*. I can remember that it was Comedian, Franklyn Moses, who is also a Kennedy Avenue neighbor, who set up a meeting with Marpin's public relations officer, Irvin Durand. The meeting ended with Marpin Telecoms offering to foot the cost of the new edition. The book was launched at

Hummingbird Inn and on Marpin Television. At that time, Frankly was setting up his advertisement agency called SFX Advertising.

FRONTLINE POETS

“The whole idea was to promote creative writing and reach people on street level.”

Eddy Toulon, Manager/secretary of the Frontline Cooperative Services

Frontline Bookstore was the venue for the launching of Roosevelt Kwame's, *Whispers of Passion*. The event was the first of its kind. It was held in the open air, outside of the Frontline Bookstore. Eddie Toulon, Manager/secretary of the Frontline Cooperative Services and coordinator of the event was reported to have said in an article appearing on in the *Tropical Star* of August 3, **1994**, that the Night of Poetry was held on the roadside because the whole idea was to promote creative writing and 'reach people on street level.' Guild members: Emmanuel Prince, Peter Piper, Harry Sealey, Alvin Malone, Dr. Kay Polydore and myself also shared poetic pieces with the appreciative audience.

In October of **1994**, I would be among recipients of a certificate of Appreciation from the Dominica Writers Guild during the hosting of a World Poetry Day activity at Alliance Francaise. At this event the Masters of Ceremony duties was shared by Frontline's Eddie Toulon, and broadcaster Steinberg Henry. "Culture is also about creative ideas philosophy and science as much as about singing and

dancing,” said Henry, reported in the October 21, 1994 edition of the New Chronicle.

By **1995**, the DWG was beginning to be taken seriously as a formidable player in the cultural landscape of Dominica. Over the last decade, despite lack of funding, the group had managed to survive, and since 1991, a renewed energy propelled the group. Rachid Osmand, editor of the New Chronicle in an editorial of July 19, **1995** praised the Dominica Writers Guild for their efforts. He wrote, ” We notice that some effort is being made to resuscitate the Dominica Writers Guild, and we heartily commend those valiant persons who are striving to breath new life into an organisation that is vital to our spiritual uplift.”

The editorial, titled, ‘ *The non-reader and an impoverishment of spirit*’ observed that the reading, especially among our young must be encouraged, and should not be continued to be seen as the privilege of the rich. In addition, the editorial said, “It is a pity that persons who likes to read books are looked upon by so many as being eccentric and perhaps, ‘not being all that there.’ We believe that the Writers Guild should be allowed all the encouragement it could get. And one of its primary goals must be working for a resurgence of the habit of reading among our people.”

Meanwhile, a steering committee had been elected to oversee the Guild’s return to its former grace.

According to the Tropical Star, July 19, 1995 edition, on July 12th, a steering committee was established prepare the way for the elections of officers to serve in the executive of the Dominica Writers Guild. Danny Reid was selected as

chairperson; Harry Sealey as Secretary and Lucia John as Treasurer. A constitutional committee was also set up charged with drafting a constitution to report back to the general membership. The new constitution was adopted in November 1995. On Tuesday, 30th, January the first Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held. Gerald La Touche was voted President of the guild under its new constitution. Danny Reid, was elected Vice- president, Albert Williams as secretary, Harry Sealey as treasurer and Carla Hutchinson as Assistant Secretary /treasurer.

Tropical Star, July 19, 1995,

WORD SOUND AND POWER

1995 saw the United Workers Party (UWP), with Edison James at the helm, win the general elections on June 12.

UWP founded by James in 1988, won 11 of the 21 constituencies, bringing an end to the unbroken, three consecutive terms of the Dominica Freedom Party (DFP) which had been power since 1980 led by Eugenia Charles.

In **1995** a new wave of writers, poets and authors joined the Dominica Writers Guild. Among was proprietress of Caribana and the Iris Dangleben Gallery, Carla Armour. Who herself is an artist and a writer, and became host of the the Dominica Writers Guild's, monthly 'night of dramatic readings' dubbed Word Sound and Power. The meetings were held on the first Wednesday of every month, and would also be the meeting place for our executive meetings. The first of the monthly meetings was held on April 1st.

VOICES OF THE POETS



In July, I was one of the poets that helped make the DOMFESTA 95 show, 'Voices of the Poets' a success. Since the guild's inception in the early 80s, the guild received a lot of support, and we collaborated on numerous cultural activities, such as World Poetry Day, Independence Day celebrations and the Dominica Festival of Arts (DOMFESTA). In 1983 DOMFESTA was originally intended to offer an alternative outlet for creatives: dancers, playwrights, musicians, artists etc, during the summer months to coincide with school holidays to provide a source of cultural entertainment. It also culminated with the observance of Emancipation Day, and the guild would be called on to

organise poetry readings at the Old Mill Cultural Center and the Arawak House of Culture. In 1995, the theme for the month-long schedule of activities was 'Peace Through The Arts', and on the evening of Monday July 31, the guild staged 'Voices of the Poets.'

As usual I was in top form. My outfit for the evening was sponsored by various business houses and my poetry routine was flawless. Anyone one who has attended any of my poetry readings will know, I seldom read poetry. Except for dramatic effect. I prefer to stride the stage like a shakespearean actor, delivering my message with the theatrics of Bob Marley my mentor. My trademark was to string a number of shorter poems into a long one, and would on occasion solicit audience call and response. Needless to say, Pearle Christian, a cultural officer told me, "you really deserve to be on the big stage."

APPRECIATION & PARTICIPATION

From June 21 to July 8th, 1995 Dominican poets had the occasion to attend a two-week writer's workshop at the UWI School of Continuing Studies, Elmshall organised by the Kiwanis Club of Roseau, and the Division of Culture. The function was sponsored by Barclays Bank PLC and was conducted by Canadian Poet, Nehassaiu De Gannes who shared her expertise and performed several of her pieces. As I have mentioned, guild members were in demand to give talks, or participate in readings. I remember from time to time conducting workshops, or providing some sort of artistic

support. Even in the 2000s. Even when I became a reporter for the Chronicle, my involvement with the guild did not abate, and I would be called upon by the Venezuelan Embassy, for example, judge art competitions and other assignments that came my way. Below, on the right is a certificate of appreciation from the Division of Culture for services rendered as a 'Summer Day Camp Tutor.'

WRITERS GUILD ON KAIRI

On August 14, aired its first radio programme on the newly-opened FM radio station, Kairi FM. The small outfit was located in building upstairs on Old Street. Veteran broadcasters, Alvin Knight and Dennis Joseph were involved as well as persons like Alex Bruno and Robert Joseph who we knew as Guvie. During one of my scheduled shows, Bruno would ask me if, "are you one of us now?" I can't remember my answer. According to the current owners, "Kairi FM started broadcasting on November 14, 1994 on Old Street in the capital city of Roseau on two frequencies of 107.9 and 93.1." As you may have sensed by now, the Dominica Writers Guild was at its zenith. The public and private sector was excited about what they were reading, seeing and hearing on the media. Not only Caribana, but Humming Bird Inn, Vena's Guest House all accommodated the writers guild. Kairi FM was no exception. Harry Sealey informed the guild that Alvin Knight had invited us to partner with Kairi to present a new show that they were thinking of called '*Poets Corner*'

Ian Jackson and myself were the main hosts. We featured members of the guild who read thier poems and short stories. The 1995 Atlantic hurricane Season was particularly active that year. “The season produced twenty-one tropical cyclones, nineteen named storms, as well as eleven hurricanes and five major hurricanes (Wikipedia).

I can remember, a number of the guild members wrote poems about the various hurricanes that year. According to wikipedia, “Tropical Storm Marilyn on September 14, Marilyn further intensified to a hurricane. Later that day, Marilyn made landfall near Jenny Point, Dominica, with winds of 80 mph (130 km/h) at 21:00 UTC.”

Poets Corner was aired live, Monday to Thursday from 6: Alvin 30pm to 7pm and ran for until November, when as the main host, I reasoned with alvin that the guild had so much more to offer and that we could host the show ourselves. The format of the show up until then, was that we would prepare the contents and alvin would host the programme as well as master the controls. In the new programme which I named ‘*Review*’ in keeping with the name of our newsletter of the same name, we prepared the programme and did the hosting ourselves and Alvin simply did the linking behind the console. Alvin also asked us to prepare a script for a radio announcement, which he voiced for us.

The programme was now one, hour long from 7- 8pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Jacko continued to do a segment, and I would have guests pre-scheduled for weeks. Besides active guild members, I featured Lennox Honychurch, who in 1995 had just released his 2nd edition of *The Dominica Story*,

Alec Lazare, Alwin Bully, Christabel La Ronde, Carla Armour, Gerald La Touche just to name a few. The programme survived in that format for at least a year. Gerald La Touche, who in **1996** published his first book poetry *To Catch a Life* published by Janus Press of London, would assume the presidency of the Guild in February of **1996**, and he became a regular host of the programme. In 1997, I was nominated for the DBS Radio FAME Award for Best Radio Program for the one-hour, literary radio program. By March 1998 the programme was aired only on Sundays from 7pm. Despite our best efforts, the programme failed to attract sponsorship and eventually fizzled out.

DISTANT VOICES

In December, Canada-based, Dominican author, Irving Andre published *Distant Voices – The Genesis Of An Indigenous Literature In Dominica* a 300-page text that surveyed the literature of the Commonwealth of Dominica from the early 19th century to the 90s. Of me he wrote that , “Not only Ras Mo but that of Ras Albert Williams accelerated the rehabilitation of dreadlocked persons within the community,” (Andre 1996 pp 264-265)

1996 – THROUGH THE FAR EYE

...the light tone of his singing voice to the words of his poems, and the organised drumming was something which could have gone on all night.

Tropical Star Wednesday, May 29, 1996 – page 5

In May, I represented the local chapter of Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) at a regional EWF convention held over a weekend in Guadeloupe in **1996**. The assembly was held over a weekend at the the camp of a Rastafarian elder, Jah Eliejah Adanjah and his family and followers. I can remember that this was the first time that I had left the island since I arrived on May 2, 1972. I was invited to a follow up conference in July but this fell through due to late arrangements. Mwata took responsibility, as he was aware that I was invited to the follow up meeting. I had travelled on an emergency passport legitimate for only a few days, and would have to have it renewed. Anyway, as soon as I returned to Dominica, I resumed the final editing to my latest publication, my third book of poems, *Through The Far Eye*. The poems in *Through the Far Eye* were reflections inspired by events in my life, and in society at large. I owe a long list of people a debt of gratitude to those who worked with me in one way or another behind the scenes to produce the manuscript; to have it published, and to plan and execute the launch. In reflection, every publication follows a similar progression from seeding the initial idea to fulfilment. That taste of seeing your name in print never goes away. The front cover design and typesetting was done by, fellow guild member, Alma Daroux. She worked at a Campbells Business Machines, that was located on King George Street. *Tracy Rabess* an artiste and also a poet wrote the introduction. Tracy ran the Artwear Gallery on King George V Street where she sold her “hand-painted clothes using tie-

dye and batik processes” Harry Sealey had information on how to obtain an international standard book number (ISBN). I applied and received the following number: ISBN 976-8155-00-0 (PBK). Jeane Finucane, the owner of [Hummingbird Inn](#), at Rock-A-Way, Morne Daniel, agreed to host the launch of the book at her establishment. She was also instrumental in getting the book over the final hurdle at Tropical Printers.

DBS RADIO FAME AWARD NOMINEE

In 1997, I was nominated for the DBS Radio FAME Award for Best Radio Program for the one-hour, literary radio program — Review. It was Tem durand who told me that he had recommended me for the ward. The other nominee, was a disc jockey, Roy Protector. I remember that it was Gerald La touche who was the president of the Guild at that time, so he told me that if I was given the award he would receive it on behalf of the guild. The award was given to Roy, but it was a testament to the high regard given by my peers for my efforts for producing the show was.

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CHAPTER 13

JOURNEY THROUGH THE 1990S

CONCLUDES

SECURITY OFFICER



Albert Williams, security officer (1996 – 2002)

On June 19, 1996, The Independent ran a story entitled *Ras Albert Williams: His poetry and his life*. It was based on a candid interview conducted by seasoned reporter, Helena Durand, who has herself since turned published author of numerous books on Christian life.

On June 19, 1996, The Independent ran a story entitled *Ras Albert Williams: His poetry and his life*. It was based on a candid interview conducted by a seasoned reporter, Helena Durand, who has herself since turned published author of numerous books on Christian life.

By November, I was a security officer. I was introduced to former police inspector Joshua James, by the then, Police Chief Desmond Blanchard. I had held discussions with Mr. Blanchard about my ongoing domestic situation, and he asked me whether I would be interested in becoming a security officer. James ran a unit called Professional Security Limited out of a three-story building in Pottersville .

I sat and passed a security officers course, from 18/11/96 to 4/12/96, and for the best part of 6 years I was detailed at Banque Francaise Commerciale (BFC) on Independence street, Roseau. My activities with the Dominica Writers Guild (DWG) continued unabated. In April 1997, the Guild held its 2nd Annual General Meeting at the Roseau Youth Center, on High Street. According to the New Chronicle of April 19, 1997, Gerald La Touche was re elected as the President. I was elected to serve as vice-President. Albert Bellot, Treasurer; Justina John, Secretary and Ian Jackson, as Assistant secretary /Treasurer completed the new executive to run the guild for the term 1997/98.

Between working fulltime, I continued to submit articles and poems, and letters to the editor to the existing newspapers in the city. The United Workers Party (UWP) had launched a newspaper, *Voice of the People* in 1997. I submitted a few poems and short stories in February of 1997 and in 1999.

DISTANT-LEARNING

In January of 1999, I commenced a long-distance correspondence course with Harcourt Learning Direct (formerly International Correspondence School (ICS), based in Scranton Philadelphia, USA, in Journalism and Short Story Writing. The assignments were a mix of multiple choices questions based on the reading materials, and submitting hand written wrticle and short stories. Back then there was no email communication or social media, so everything was handwritten and posted via airmail, and waited for 4 weeks for the grades to return. It was an excited time. Up until then, I had no formal education. There was no graduation ceremony for the cohort of 1979 at the Dominica Grammar School (DGS), because the Hurricane David had devastated the island in August of that year. I only attained two GCE – C grades in English and literature; and a grade 1 in Principles of Accounts, and a 3 in principles of Business when a friend at the library encouraged to try to do a few subjects at CXC in 1997. I always had a hunger for journalism, and moreso, I loved reading and writing. The 6 years I worked as a security guard provided a steady income, and I rented a room in Morne Bruce.

I can remember those days at BFC. I remember from time to time customers in the queue would ask staff why I wasn't behind the counter. One police officer asked, "why are you working here?" At any rate, those days were enjoyable. I remember, too, when the banks staged what they called a 'bank-a-thon. It was a night of the talent of bank employees at the Arawak house of culture. Although I wasn't directly employed by BFC, I was allowed to perform with them and to perform a poem routine. The bank-a-thon was held for two years concurrently. I can't remember the exact date, and I can't find any reportage online, but in the first year, I remember, BFC decided to perform a mock talent show, with male employees dressed up as female models, and female employees dressed up as Male models with outlandish fashions, and swim wear. In the second round I performed favourite poetry routine. The following year, BFC decided to present themselves as a choir. We sang Jimmy Cliff's, *Many rivers to cross*.

WEEKEND IN ST VINCENT

In June 1999, I was selected to attend a weekend seminar in St Vincent as part of a delegation of the New Apostolic Church in Dominica. The Church has its beginnings in the 1800s in Germany and Great Britain, and they believe that the church is the reestablishment of the Apostolic order, and its 10 million followers worldwide believe in the **first** **resurrection**. I had been asked by Priest Joseph from Bense, the only active congregation on the island, if I could help to

resurrect the congregation in Roseau, and I was given the keys to the small wooden church on the corner of Boyds Avenue and Bath Road. The membership of the church in Roseau had dwindled following the death of the last priest, Priest Edwards about 15 years ago. I became the contact person in Roseau, and I was invited to accompany Priest Gabriel Joseph to St. Vincent and other officials. In April of 2001, I The Sun published an article I wrote entitled *New Apostolics recalled* in which I provided more background on the church and its mission.

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CHAPTER 14

ON BECOMING A JOURNALIST



Albert Williams in 2001
(photo: Carole Robinson)

When the 21st century came, I was 38 years old. By 2000, I had been writing and publishing poetry, short stories and non-fiction for the last 20 years. International news headlines published fears of the millennium bug, or what became known as the Y2K bug. The New York Times wrote, “Early on, computer workers began warning that some machines and

software would malfunction because they would read 00 as 1900 instead of 2000 or as no date at all,” (nytimes 1999) January 31st, 2000, saw the Dominica Labour Party (DLP) led by former Black Power Activist, Roosie Douglas win the general elections entering into a coalition with the Dominica Freedom Party (DFP) to end the United Workers Party (UWP) one term in office. The DLP last won an election in 1975.

Working as a security guard provided much needed stability, and an injection of funds to provide for living expenses, child maintenance and, to pay for my tuition on the Journalism/short story programme. By 2001, the bank would change its security provider, and I continued to work with former DFP minister, Henry George in his new unit, Hill Top Security.

Between May 1999 to September 2000, I had a series of *Letters to the Editor*, and short stories published by The Independent. The Independent was run by Mr. Monroe who I'd met in 1982 when he was the manager at the Tropical Printers 1985:

Letters to the editor and short stories printed in The Independent

- *A call to be sensitive* – May 19, 1999
- *Through the far eye* – May 26, 1999
- *Critics wanted* – June 2, 1999
- *Be security conscious* – June 9, 1999
- *Men should take stock* – June 23, 1999
- *Love God above all else* – July 7, 1999

- *Smile you're 21* – July 21, 1999
- *The Storm* – August 30, 2000
- *The Storm* – August, 2000

Also between 2000 – 2001, I had a series of articles published by The Sun. Again, the owner/editor was Charles James, who I had worked with at the Botanic Gardens in 1983.

Articles printed in The Sun

- *Something to smile about* – October 11, 2000
- *Black activist remembered* – October 11, 2000
- *Rainforest mushrooms – an alternative cash crop* – December 20, 2000
- *Annou apwann kweyol* – March 4, 2001
- *New Apostolics recalled* – April 4, 2001
- *A critical perspective of “Really and really”* – April 25, 2001
- *Gospel in music* – May 9, 2001
- *New poetry titles this month* – July 6, 2001
- *The indefatigable Sister May* – August 6, 2001
- *Craft entrepreneur wants greater recognition* – September 24, 2001

The 2000 to 2002 period covered in this chapter saw the deaths of three influential Dominicans. Mwata passed away in October 2000; Roosie Douglas died in May of 2001, and Eddie Toulon died on October of 2001. among a wide array of subjects and topics, I would feature their works and achievements in my writings appearing in the Sun and Tropical Star even as I wrote the articles and short story

assignments for the ICS journalism and short story diploma course.

Prior to the journalism course, my writings were focused on literary and African liberation topics, and announcements about the activities of the various groups I had been part of. The course was preparing for a professional career as a freelance journalist. I was encouraged to write on a variety of topics. Included in the course were manuals on aspects of becoming a professional author or freelance journalist or both. I had been both for the last 20 years, and the course was inspiring to the least. In Chapter 15 I will review, in some detail, more of what was covered in the course and how it prepared me for working at The Chronicle.

In 2000, I wrote a feature on Dawen Dawey, *Dawen Daway's revolutionary poetry* that appeared in the September 15, 2000 edition of The Chronicle and the September 20, 2000 edition of the Tropical Star.

In 2001, a member of the BFC staff, Miss Robinson, introduced me to Mr. Nigel Lawrence who had an interest in the newly-opened Tropical Printers, and its sister organisation the newspaper, Tropical Star. She knew I was doing this correspondence course, and she knew he needed contributors for his new newspaper. He agreed to pay me \$50.00 per article, and my first article was published on Wednesday, April 4, 2001. The last, Wednesday, May 22, 2002.

Articles, poems and short stories printed the Tropical Star

The Storm – April 4, 2001
The Storm – April 11, 2001
Portals – April 11, 2001
Recipe for murder – April 18, 2001
Recipe for murder – April 25, 2001
Dear sister – May 2, 2001
For Black History Month – May 23, 2001
Dear sisters – May 9, 2001
Nature guide – May 16, 2001
Black Power – May 23, 2001
The little lamb – May 30, 2001
The little lamb – June 6, 2001
Baby in the middle – June 13, 2001
Baby in the middle – June 20, 2001
Poet passes on – August 15, 2001
Poetry from Cottage – August 22, 2001
An interview with a poet – August 29, 2001
Writers one on one – September 6, 2001
I've seen it all before – September 12, 2001
Bridging the gap with Alick Lazare – September 19, 2001
I've seen it all before – September 19, 2001
Bridging the gap with Alick Lazare – September 26, 2001
I've seen it all before – September 26, 2001
Bridging the gap with Alick Lazare – October 3, 2001
Josette Harney proclaims the word – October 3, 2001
In Eddie's footprints – October 10, 2001
Josette Harny proclaims the word – October 10, 2001
I've seen it all before – October 17, 2001
Josette Harney proclaims the word – October 17, 2001

In his own words- An interview with Ian Jacko Jackson – October 24, 2001

In his own words- An interview with Ian Jacko Jackson – October 31, 2001

In his own words- An interview with Ian Jacko Jackson – November 7, 2001

Ras Mo: His roots and purpose s an artist – November 14, 2001

Ras Mo: His roots and purpose s an artist – November 21, 2001

Petite Savanne's David Guiste – December 5, 2001

Petite Savanne's David Guiste – December 12, 2001

A Christmas tale – December 21, 2001

Discover Yoga: India's wonderful gift – January 16, 2002

Albie-J still missing after ninty days – January 23, 2002

Christian Literature Center relocated – January 30, 2002

A sportswriter's memoirs – featuring R. St. Havis Shillingford – February 6, 2002

A sportswriter's memoirs – featuring R. St. Havis Shillingford – February 13, 2002

A sportswriter's memoirs – featuring R. St. Havis Shillingford – February 20, 2002

Gospel music according to Jerry LLoyd – February 27, 2002

Gospel music according to Jerry LLoyd – March 6, 2002

Sunshine Day-Care – March 27, 2002

Sunshine Day-Care – April 3, 2002

Albert Williams earns journalism diploma – April 10, 2002

Roosevelt Richards speaks on transcendental meditation – April 3, 2002

Roosevelt Richards speaks on transcendental meditation – April 17, 2002

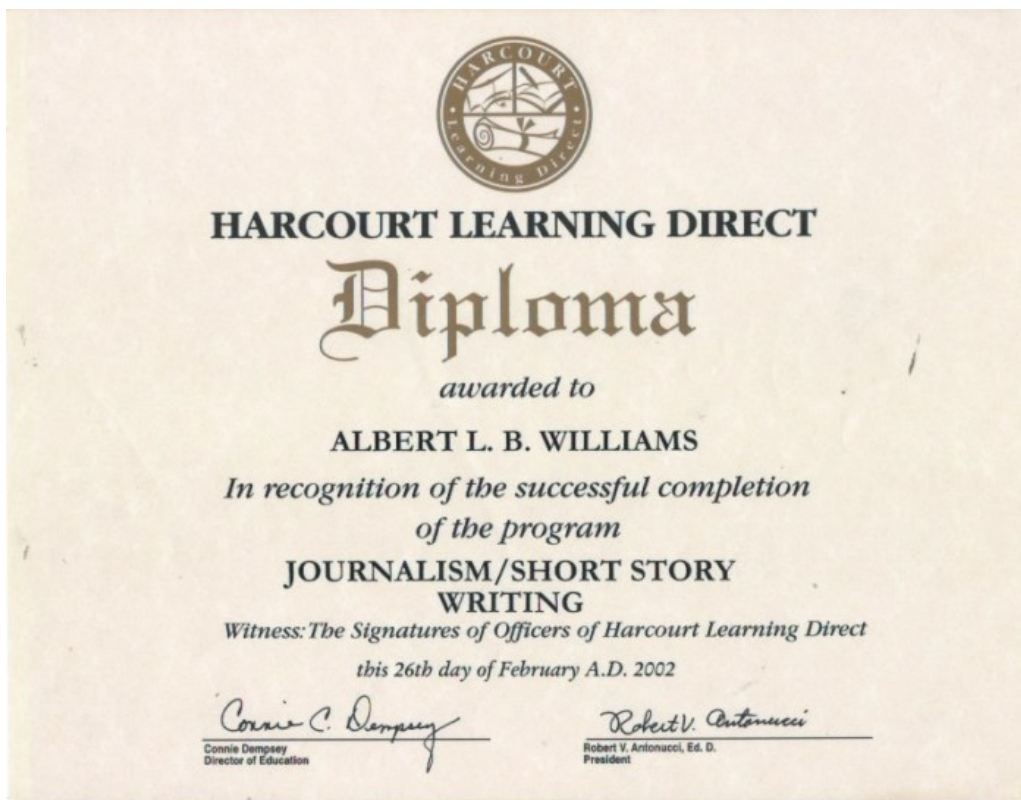
Transcendental meditation – a scientifically validated program – April 24, 2002

Transcendental meditation – a scientifically validated program – May 1, 220

Romance, relationships and Christine John – May 8, 2002

Pre-school month to be observed in June – May 22, 2002

ALBERT WILLIAMS EARNS JOURNALISM DIPLOMA



Journalism/ short story writing diploma awarded February 26, 2002



Albert Williams earns journalism diploma – April 10, 2002

I received my diploma and plaque in April of 2002, and sent out press releases to the media. I was interviewed by government information service, and published my own press release in the Tropical Star on April 10, 2002. However, it was the Chronicle that called me in for an interview to discuss working as a reporter with them. I had to make a decision. I tendered my resignation from Hill top Security and I ended the agreement with Mr. Lawrence and started employment with The Chronicle in June of 2002. Mrs Rabaess, who was the Deputy Manager at BFC told me that, “this was a good break”.

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The Sun, Roseau, Dominica

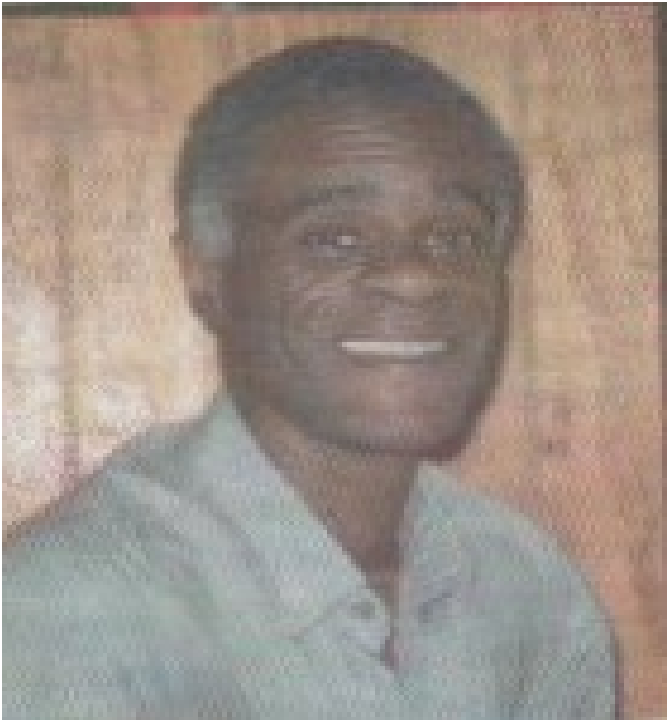
Tropical Star, Canefield, Dominica

The Albert Williams Archives

CHAPTER 15

ON BECOMING A JOURNALIST

CONCLUDES...



Albert Williams- Reporter

The transition from my job as a security guard in a bank to reporter on the leading national paper went as smoothly as could have expected. The Chronicle is the oldest surviving newspaper in Dominica established in Dominica by Belgian, Catholic Bishop Philip Schelfhaut, in 1909. From 1990, the ownership of the Chronicle was taken over by wealthy businessman and and former Chief Minister of Dominica, Frank Baron. I took it all on the chin, and soaked up the atmosphere like a sponge. At the initial meeting, I had met

with Mr. Tony White, who was the The Chronicle's manager, and the veteran journalist, Mr. Charles Deflorimonte who was the editor. He was originally from Guyana. The Chronicle had long been the starting block for many aspiring journalists in Dominica, however, hardly any of them had a formal qualification or degree in journalism, or media studies in general. In a sense, this was another first for me.

“After every full stop a new chapter opened up in the life of local creative writer, journalist, Albert Williams.

Despite the pain, the ink never died.”

Columnist, Ian Jackson

Among My peers, the only two schoolmates that had risen to varying degrees of recognition as columnists, were Edward Lawrence, who for many years wrote a weekly column in The Chronicle called *Education in focus*, and there was fellow, guild member, Ian Jackson who like me, moved among the various newspapers writing arts and entertainment articles, and who has enjoyed a long association with The Sun.

I think Jackson hit the nail on the head when he wrote in his April 22, 2002 piece: *Blood, Pen and Ink*, that he wrote in the aftermath of my diploma award, when he wrote, “After every full stop a new chapter opened up in the life of local creative writer, journalist, Albert williams. Despite the pain, the ink never died.”

In 2002, Dominica was in the throes of an economic meltdown. The country was forced into adopting austerity measures to address the empty treasury left behind by the outgoing United Workers Party (UWP) in 2000. In July of

2002, the DLP legislated that the wages and salaries of every employee falling within the 'tax net, to contribute 4 percent to the stabilization levy. The Public Service Union called out its members to protest the government's proposal for a containment of the the public sector wage bill. The government was in negotiations with the International Monetary fund (IMF) for a Poverty reduction Growth facility, and the government established an Independent Monitoring Group (IMG) to oversee the economic impact of the austerity measures and to feedback to the government.



Albert Williams on home computer (2003)

I took the transition from security guard to reporter in my stride. The Chronicle has also been a milestone for regional practitioners to list 'editor of The Chronicle' as one of their achievements. When I joined The Chronicle on June 10th, I turned 40 years old. Among my peers, the only two schoolmates from the Dominica Grammar School (DGS) who had shown some serious interest in writing were Edward Lawrence, who for many years wrote a column called '

Education in focus. The other was fellow-guild member, and poet, Ian Jackson. Jacko, as he is commonly referred to, contributed to The Independent, The Chronicle and has enjoyed a long-standing presence in The Sun with his weekly 'Spotlight' column on the Arts and entertainment scene in Dominica. Other notable columnist of my time might include: Gordon Moreau who was an economist, but wrote on a wide variety of civic topics, and there was Reginald. St Havis Shillingford who not only wrote a weekly sports piece, but together with his contemporaries, Ossie Walsh, Thomas Baptiste and others, hosted a sports radio programme on DBS Radio for many years. I think Jackson hit the nail on the head when he wrote in his April 22, 2002 article, 'Blood. Pen and ink, "After every full stop a new chapter opened up in the life of local creative writer, journalist, Albert Williams. Despite the pain, the ink never died." I had known Ian Jackson from since our primary School days at the Goodwill Junior High School, and we had seen our respective literary careers grow. Jackson would write several articles covering my career through the decades including:

- *And what of poetry?* -July 3, 1991
 - *A writer's profile – Life of a dedicated Dominican writer Albert Williams* December 17, 1997
 - *Blood, pen and ink* – April 22, 2002
-

THE NEWSROOM



My studies with ICS had given me a great introduction into newspaper journalism, how a newsroom functions, and what was the role of the humble reporter in the news-gathering process. The Chronicle perhaps also had a reputation for a high turnover of staff reporters. When I began to work at The Chronicle, I joined Shermain Bique and Laura Smith and got down to the task of 'filling the hole'. According to Charlie, news items were positioned in the paper according to the vacant slots not filled by advertisements. It is for that reason too, that any of the in-house articles that would have any coloured ink was because that page would have had a paid advertiser on that page in which color was used, and extended sparingly to any in-house news story. Other

journalists that I would meet during my time at The Chronicle were Christine St. Marie, Suprian George, Fitz Smith and Alexia Simon.

A typical day at The Chronicle started with a brief meeting with the Editor during which reporters would indicate what stories they were working on for the next issue of the paper. If there were any engagements in the diary of the editor, he would assign one or more of the reporters to cover the story. My first assignment was to follow-up on reports that an airplane had crashed in the sea off the coast of Dominica's Northeastern coast near Crompton Point. My report: *Plane crash at sea claims two lives* was published on the front page edition of Friday, June, 2002 without a by-line. I would later receive credits for articles co-authored with Alexia Simon, *Over 21,000 at music festival performances* – November 7, 2003 and *Massive turn-out as PM laid to rest* – January 23, 2004 with Suprian George, and many more on my own. (see below)

During the two and half years I worked under two Guyanese editors, first Charlie and then a lady, Gwen Evelyn. both were seasoned journalists and their mentorship was invaluable. By-lines or author credits were given strictly on the basis that the original copy did not need any improvements by the editor.



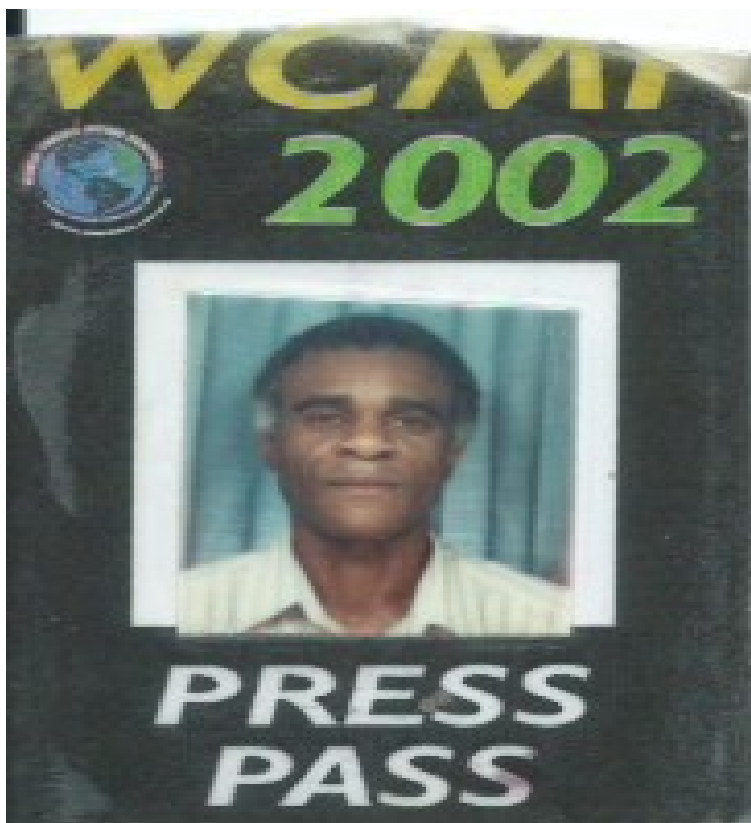
My first by-line as a Chronicle reporter

I covered a wide range of events, incidents, institutions and personalities as per my contract, and after my initial 6 month probation, I began to see more of my stories receive their by-lines on my frontpage stories. Being a journalist or reporter, is one of those professions that is more akin to being a vocation than a mere employment. In some respects, the responsibility of a reporter as such is that a community would be wore off if there were no media to disseminate news and opinions.

We see the power of the major international networks, The Chronicle which was in existence since 1909, had carried this responsibility for nearly a hundred years. In the newsroom on a shelf were the dusty volumes of every edition published, bound by year, and I would have many occasion to research story ideas or backdated information on stories and

personalities. They would come into their own when I was commissioned to research the story of the newspaper's owner, Frank Baron's political ascendancy for Irving Andre's book: *A biography of Dominica's first Chief Minister*.

My life as a reporter at The Chronicle was a steep learning curve. Dominica having the tropical climate as it does, was either very hot, or very wet or both. In no time at all, I had amassed a mountain pamphlets, brochures, handouts and other literature handed to reporters ahead of press conferences etc. I can remember at a Cable and Wireless event, reporters were given the latest 2G motorola mobiles phones. I can also remember the respect that being a reporter drew from clients of the newspaper. I can remember once turning up at the police headquarters for an interview with the public relations officer and greeted with the words, "the media is here."



Your job as a reporter, thrusts you right into the frontline and the leading edge of society where the breaking news is made. You become a first responder, and many times a front seat witness to anything from a the opening of a dolphin resort to covering three nights of the Creole Music Festival to the burial of a former prime minister, Pierre Charles to hiking up a river to rescue a car traffic accident or the opening of parliament. I also developed an interest in photography. In October, of 2002, I was selected by the editor to represent the newspaper at a a weekend photojournalism workshop organised by Caribbean environmental reporters network and the Loyola University New Orleans Center for Environmental Communications. I would also receive a small grant from the Taiwanese consulate to pursue a distance-education photography course with the New York Institute of Photography. The Venezuelan Embassy was also very keen on helping local journalists. I was invited to a workshop on TV News production; screenplay writing workshop and invited to judge an art competition, learn spanish and perform at nights of poetry.

For many years, the Media Workers Association of Dominica (MWAD) had been dormant. In 2003, another attempt was made to resurrect the organisation and I emerged as secretary. Veteran broadcaster, Dennis Joseph was elected as president.

A CATALOGUE OF BY-LINES

Front page

- *Port Charge dispute* – January 31, 2003
- *Union protests proposals -timely payment of salaries may be affected* – February 21, 2003
- *PSU strike ends* – February 28, 2003
- *No pay for protesting workers* – March 14, 2003
- *14-year-old found dead* – May 9, 2003
- *Jeep plunges 200 feet – One Critically injured* – June 20, 2003
- *Man murdered in kidnap attempt* – September 19, 2003
- *All is not well with the IMG* – October 10, 2003
- *Boy electrocuted outside beach bar* – October 17, 2003
- *Over 21,000 at music festival performances* – November 7, 2003 ±
- *Mudslides kills two – Houses in danger of collapsing* – December 12, 2003
- *Bellevue landslide...Urgent help needed to relocate residents* – December 19, 2003
- *Massive turn-out as PM laid to rest* – January 23, 2004 §
- *IMF gives gov't green light* – February 13, 2004
- *Man attempts to attack patient* – March 5, 2004
- *Man stabbed to death in confrontation* – March 12, 2004
(±) co-authored with Alexia Simon (§) co-authored with Suprian George

Inside entertainment

- *Inside entertainment* – August 2, 2002
- *Mask Eruption launches new CD* – August 9, 2002
- *Two top bands sign on for Creole Festival VI* – August 30, 2002
- *Preparations for World Creole Music Festival move into high gear* – August 16, 2002



Arts and Entertainment

- Stars were swinging on Labour Day – September 6, 2002
- *Guiste's signature of a poet' will be out soon* – September 13, 2002
- *Tourist attractions* – September 20, 2002
- *Keep traditional masquerade alive* – October 4, 2002
- *Jackson brings his poetry to life on CD* – October 11, 2002
- *World Poetry Day* – October 18, 2002
- *Appreciate our heritage* – October 25, 2002
- *Michele Henderson hopes to 'put Dominica on the map'* – November 15, 2002
- *'Look Us' impressive on debut* – November 22, 2002
- 2003 Calypso season kicks off December 18 – December 6, 2002
- *'The Bobb' makes his mark in T&T* – January 10, 2003

Current affairs

- *Managing in challenging economic times* – June 28, 2002
- *Catholic men display their solidarity* – September 20, 2002

- *Photojournalist from the OECS attend workshop in St. Lucia* – November 15, 2002
- *Improvement in arrivals for 2002/03 tourist season -Tourism Director* – January 24, 2003
- *Duchess dethrones Young Rising Star* – February 28, 2003
- *Vernelle Edmund wins art competition* – March 21, 2003
- *Copyright legislation... Prosecute music pirates* – Marie – May 23, 2003

Sports

- *Vitamalt 2003 basketball season begins* – May 23, 2003
- *Harlem United beat ACS Zebians* – September 26, 2003

Features

- *Nadine is Madam Fete Kaiche* – August 9, 2002
- *Visually impaired guitarist releases first CD* – December 20, 2002
- *Christmas, Dominica style* – December 20, 2002
- *Improvement in arrivals for 2002/03 tourist season – Tourism Director* – January 24, 2003
- *The monster that landed* – August 29, 2003
- *Fighting for freedom in Iraq* – August 22, 2003
- *Former P. M. recounts hurricane horror* – August 29, 2003
- *A brief history of theatre in Dominica* – September 12, 2003
- *Adorable, aren't we?* – September 12, 2003
- *Rising above the odds* – December 5, 2003
- *A sign of Christmas* – December 19, 2003
- *Christmas without Darnel* – December 19, 2003
- *A Christmas tale* – December 19, 2003

- Paramount Printers Ltd – 10th anniversary special (photo spread)

Street Vibes

- *The new prime minister* – January 16, 2004
- *Stop the violence – enjoy the time* – February 13, 2004
- *Should the new PM consider snap elections?* – March 26, 2004

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CHAPTER 16

2004 – THE END OF AN ERA

When the late prime minister, Pierre Charles died on January 6, it was the 31-year-old, Minister of Education, **Roosevelt Skerrit** that was his replacement two days later. The death of Pierre Charles was made all the more traumatic not only because his state of his health was reported over the media for several months leading up to his demise, but that it had occurred when his predecessor, Rose Douglas died suddenly on October 2000, less than a year after he led the Dominica Labour Party (DLP) to victory. The DLP administration was also in grips of the demands of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In 2002, the parliament approved the imposition of a Stabilisation Levy. The legislation assented to by President Vernon Shaw, and gazetted on October 3, 2002 read: *An act respecting the imposition of a levy for the purposes of stabilizing the economy*. The Pierre Charles administration favoured the 4 percent stabilisation levy rather than axing 10 percent of the public service and/or 10 per cent pay cut, as a route out of the economic crisis left by the United Workers Party (UWP) when the DLP took office in 2000.

For Roosevelt Skerrit, aged 31, it was the beginning of an era for him as political leader of the DLP and prime minister of

Dominica. Little did I know, that before the end of 2004, it would be the end of an era for me in Dominica, and the opening of a new chapter in my life.

THE COUNTDOWN

2004 met me as a reporter on The Chronicle. As I read my diary of that year, memories of both happy and sad times were triggered in my creative imagination as I continued to write *My Windrush Story – The narrative of the life of Albert*

Williams (Written by himself.) It's was a white (now dusty-grey), puffy, leatherette covered, embossed with the Sagicor logo and the name Margaret Laurent- Financial Advisor. As I may have mentioned in a previous chapter, over the course of the two years I worked at the Chronicle, I had built up a mountain of literature associated with the various stories I covered, and on occasion would receive complimentary merchandise, such as this diary, a mobile phone from cable and wireless and a camera from the Environmental news network when I went to the weekend photojournalism course in St. Lucia.

A quick sweep of the doodle entries of the first few weeks of 2004 into my diary underscores the life of a working journalist.

Tuesday, January 6, 2004 – Prime minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Pierre Charles, died in office.

Thursday, January 8, 2004 – Swearing-in ceremony Roosevelt Skerrit at the President's Office.

Friday, January 9, 2004 – Meeting with Venezuelan Ambassador, Carmen Martinez de Grijalva to discuss Spanish Week

Monday, January 12, 2004 – Dr Liao of Taiwan embassy pledges UUS\$300.00 to New York Institute of Photography Course

Thursday, January 15, 2004 – Meeting with Cabinet Secretary on funeral arrangements for state funeral. Meeting with Manager of Dexia, Gregory Thomas to discuss Agriculture in 2003

Friday, January 16, 2004 – Coverage of PM's Lying in state at State House

Saturday, January 17, 2004 – Attended state Funeral in Grand Bay

SUCCESS MAGAZINE



Erica and I on a visit to the rainforest aerial tram

In April of 2004, I ended my contract with The Chronicle and joined forces with a young, entrepreneur and aspiring metaphysician, Erica Joseph. I had met Erica during my ‘*Street Vibes*’ beat, with The Chronicle and she was among those asked the question whether the newly-sworn in prime minister should call a snap election in the edition of *The new prime minister* on January 16, 2004. As I mentioned in Chapter 15, one of the perks of being a reporter, is meeting interesting persons at all stages in their career. Now Dr. Erica Joseph she has become one of only two doctors of Metaphysics on the island and has gone on to pen numerous publications detailing her work and philosophy, and she has extended her practice to include being an advocate for children with learning disabilities. She also offers vocational training to parents and social workers who may want to be better equipped to understand brain damage or impairment such as: dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

In 2004, she was had a small office on Kennedy Avenue, before I offered her to move her business to the New Apostolic Church build on the corner of Boyd’s Avenue and and Bath Road opposite the police station. Recall, that the keys of the church had been given to me, and I was also interested in seeing the building made use of instead of the building standing neglected could offer some value to the town. We put in place the foundation of what is now Success Company Ltd and began to draw up plans for the establishment of a glossy magazine: *Success Magazine-The Magazine for Humble Beginners* that was to promote

‘personal well-being’ and’ features on successful persons in the society.



Erica and I on a visit to the rainforest aerial tram

Success Magazine-The Magazine for Humble Beginners was promoted as part of a larger business concept namely: Success Enterprises that we predicted would be developed into a full-fledged non-profit organization over the next 5-year period.

Taking risks has always been part of my *modus operandi*. When I had moved from security to reporter I had taken a financial hit for the privilege. During the probation period, my salary was half of what I earned with the long hours I worked as a security officer. And even when I was fully appointed 6 months later, the \$1000- salary would still be several hundred dollars less. Having stepped down from *The Chronicle*, I for one was desperate to get this project off the ground. I had

done it several times with my own publications, and I was convinced that I could get this off the ground within weeks, if not days. Furthermore, the pendulum had begun to swing the other way.

ENTREPRENEURS IN THE FIELD

Erica was and still is a lifestyle coach. From out of her practice on Kennedy Avenue, and continued on Bath Road, she provided counselling and consultations. She was a strong advocate of affirmations and produced CDs and pamphlets explaining the concept and their benefits. Together we worked on building the business model for the magazine and began the process of lining up potential subjects for features. Through Harry Sealy, we met a researcher, Andreas Melvik, who was working on a thesis on the Rastafari movement in Dominica. We visited, long-serving, convicted prisoner of the murder of Ted Honychurch, former Dread cultist, Eric Joseph at Stockfarm prison. My photography skills were also in demand, and we received commissions from the Venezuelan Embassy regularly to document their activities. We also received a commission from the School of Continuing Studies, Resident Tutor, Edith Burnett- Alleyne, to cover the first Jean Rhys Festival held at the Garraway. We also covered a preschool graduation. Erica also introduced me to the wider world of microsoft software such as the early editions of Adobe Photoshop and Pagemaker.

DECISION TO LEAVE DOMINICA

Despite our best efforts, our plans for the magazine did not get off the ground as soon as I had planned. By September, I began to have crisis talks with my confidant who helped me raise the funds for a ticket out of Dominica. I sold what possessions I had, and began my exodus with the stealth of a military operation. Very few persons were privy to my plans to leave the island. I thought that making the move to England, the land of my birth, I could capitalise on my achievements in Dominica, I could seek opportunities to advance my journalism and photography, and start a new life. When I arrived at the decision to return to the UK, I was fulfilling my own prophecy. As mentioned in Chapter 11, in my Chronicle article of May 18, 1990, I called on the students to consider careers in the cultural industry,. In my address to the students and staff at the Dominica Grammar School's closing ceremony for 5th formers in 1990 as part of our ninth Bob Marley Day observances I said, "We recognise the need to train young people to be cultural workers as the Awin Bullys, the Gordon Hendersons, the Pearle Christians, the Sobers Esprits, and others will eventually have move on to more challenging horizons which necessitates the recruitment of a younger crop of cultural organisers." I was aged 42, and 32 years of my life in Dominica had flown by like a long dream, and in some instances, like a never-ending nightmare. However, just like when you know when you have met your soulmate, I knew the time was right for me to leave Dominica. When the year had begun, I had no idea that it

would end with me living in a hostel in the United Kingdom, and on the verge of meeting my future wife, Tempie King.

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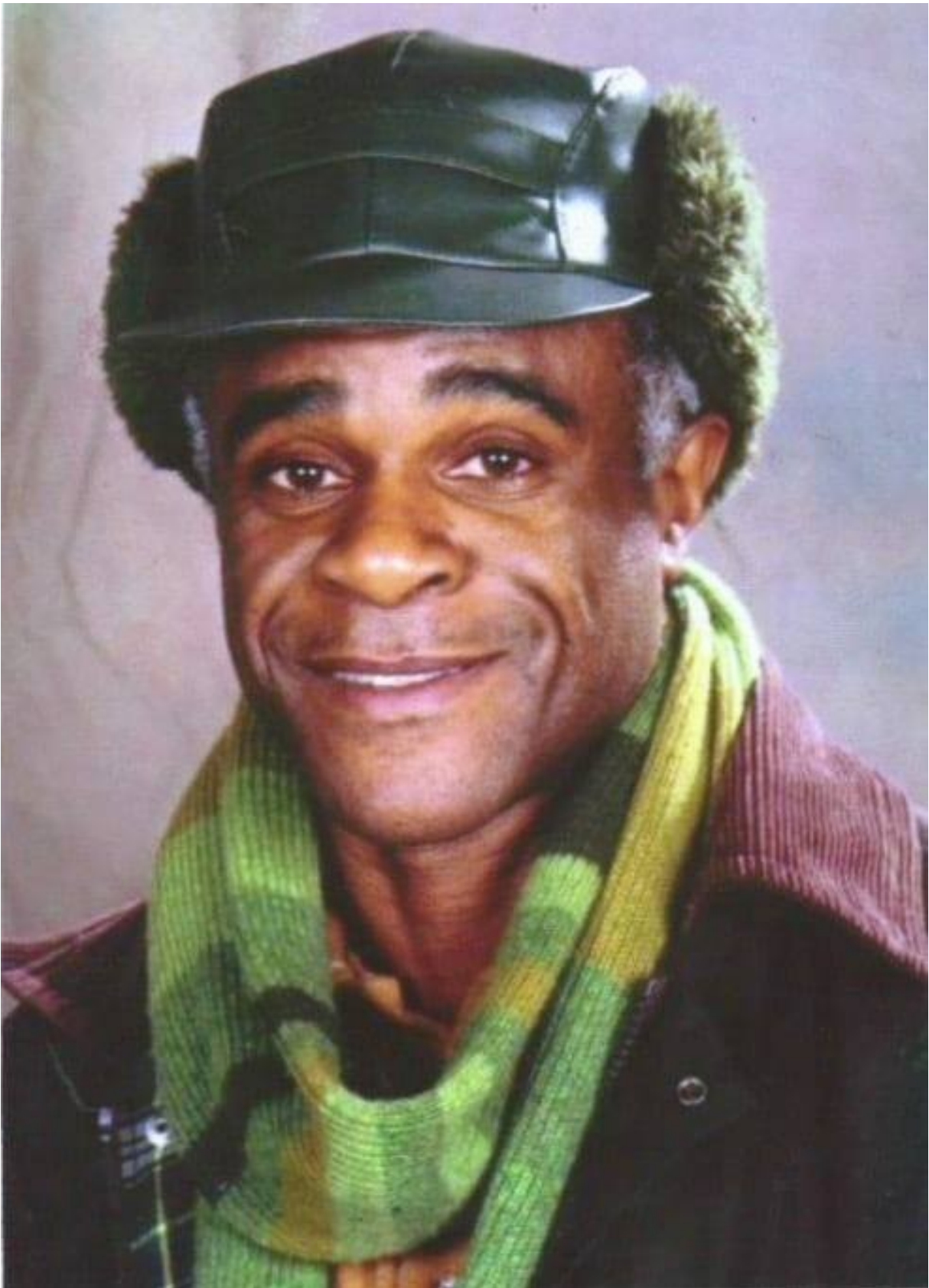
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CHAPTER 17

COMING HOME TO ROOST



Tempie visits London



Albert Williams

One of the first things I did when I returned to England, Saturday, October 2nd, 2004, was to research the web or a publisher to publish my collection of short stories that I had written

during my journalism and short story course with International Correspondence school. According to my diary, I made the down payment for my ticket to England on September 28, 2004, and picked it up the following day. The aircraft took off at 2:15pm from Melville Hall airport bound first for VC Bird Airport Antigua. We stayed for a few minutes then headed for Grantley Adams Airport in Barbados, before the 7 1/2 – hour, 3, 757 mile flight to Gatwick Airport United Kingdom. I arrived in England October 2, 2004 at 09:00 AM local time. It was a Saturday, and being October, it was mid Autumn. and it was cold. Within days, I was living at the Crawley Open House on Stephenson Way, Three Bridges, Crawley. The organisation was founded in 1982 and moved into its present location in 2001. The hostel provided single and double rooms to males and females who found themselves in need of short-term accommodation. There was a day center, the hostel also provided counsellor services, and acted as a gateway to other services to help the guests move on.

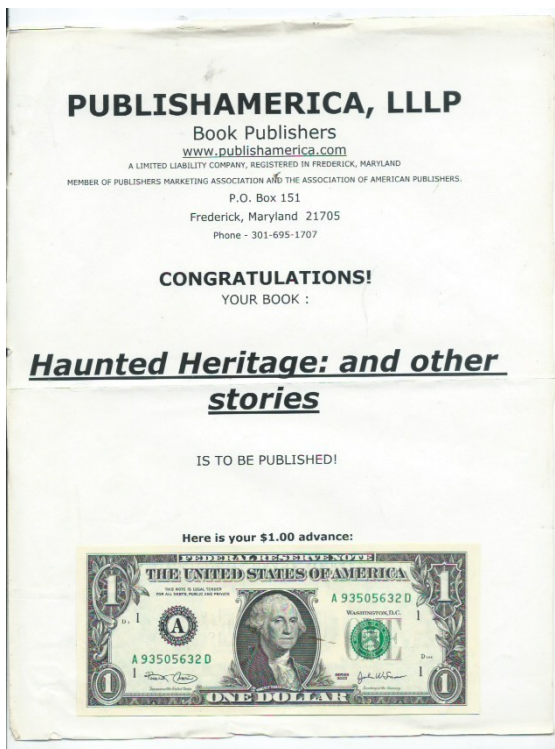


Albert Williams at Crawley Open House 10th anniversary

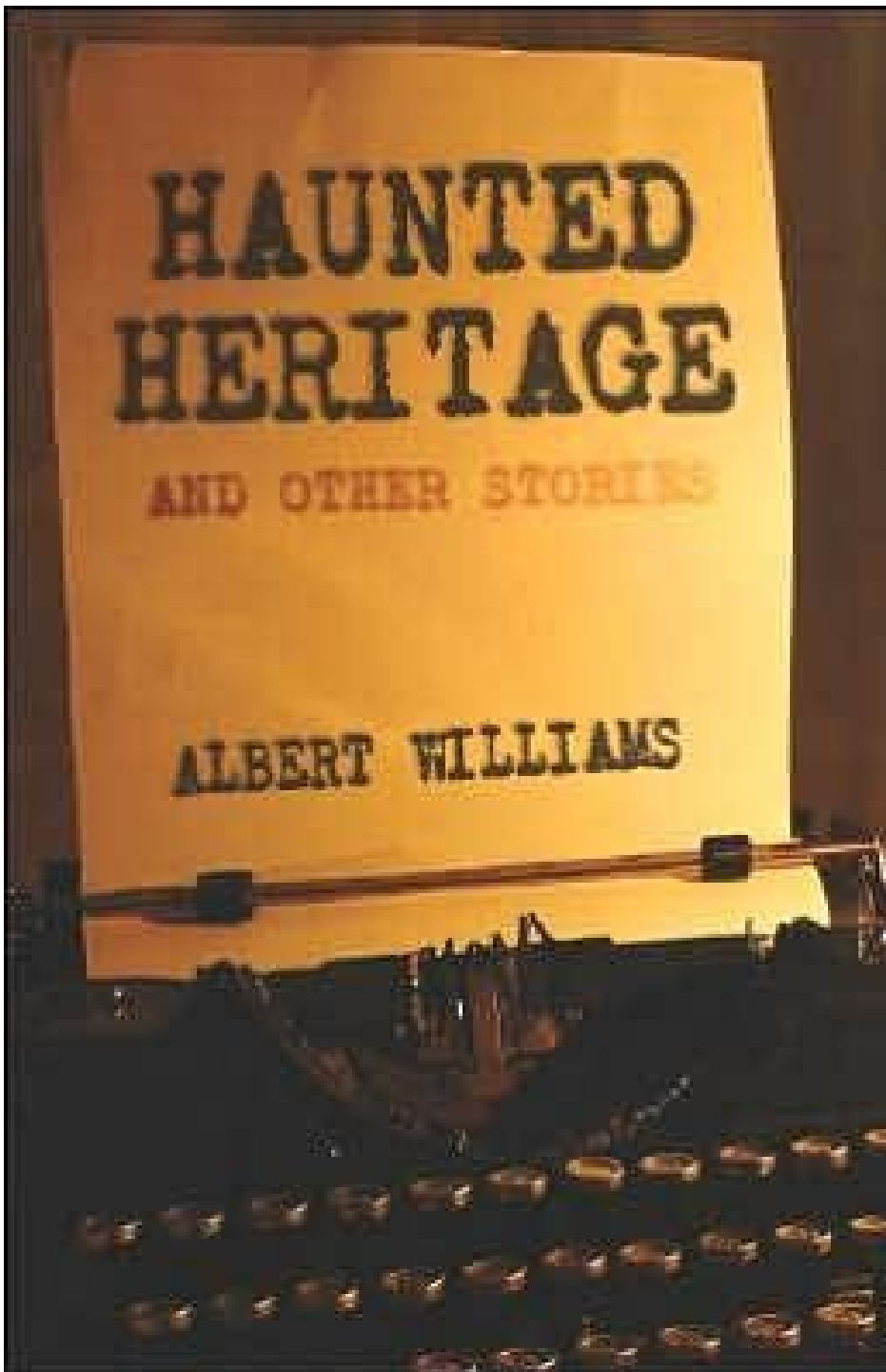
Over the first two years of my return to the UK I availed myself of all the advice I could get from organisations such as the Job Center, the Crawley Borough Council and other non-governmental organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. I registered for small business training programmes and even was accepted on an initiative of the BBC. I had my sights on continuing my interests in journalism and photography. Before I left Dominica, I had mentioned to Paul Charles, a veteran Dominican journalist, of my intention to travel, and he suggested that I should contact the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ).

I researched the possibility of starting a magazine UK- Caribbean. The advisor told me that I should consider doing it as a digital version I reconnected with members of the New Apostolic Church while living in Bognor Regis, and it is while living at Linden Street, I submitted the manuscript of Haunted Heritage and Other Stories to an online publisher, PublishAmerica.

HAUNTED HERITAGE AND OTHER STORIES



Between 1999 and 2002, I did a correspondence course in Journalism and Short Story Writing with International Correspondence School (ICS). For years, they were leaders in long-distance education, and their adds would appear regular in The Chronicle newspaper. Back in 2005, users of the world wide web included online business like PublishAmerica (PA). PA styled itself as a ‘traditional publisher’ because the company front-ended the production and promotion of the manuscript at no cost to the author. At the time, this was a publishing innovation that had other more ‘traditional’ publishers up in quite a row.



I submitted my manuscript by email to PA on Thu, 21 Jul 2005 at and I received an email of acceptance on Tue, 26 Jul 2005. A flurry of emails passed back and forth approving the typesetting and and cover graphics. On September 19, 2005, I received the framed symbolic one dollar royalty, as a token of goodwill from the publisher that the author would receive a percentage of every book sold through its online bookstores and affiliates. Another innovation for its time, was the author's private message board. Besides given a website to promote myself and my book and I was added to the Private Board on PublishAmerica on 7 Dec 2005, and by 14 Dec 2005 received 5 complimentary copies of my newly-published book. *Haunted Heritage and Other Stories* (ISBN-10142410680X) was officially published

November 21, 2005. It is 132-page book with 9 short stories, a novella and a long poem (Goddess). I was excited. I sent a copy to the Public library in Dominica and sold one copy to West Sussex Library here in the UK. I also wrote press releases. The local newspaper, Crawley Observer, sent out a photographer to my home to take a photograph and the following article, *Author's Stories Published* appeared in it's December 14, 2005 edition and *Start you own business* –edition of September 2005

Author's stories published

AUTHOR Albert Williams is set to have a collection of short stories published in the New Year.

Albert, 43, of Dalewood Gardens, Northgate, will have 'Haunted Heritage and Other Stories' released to booksellers in early 2006.

'Haunted Heritage' is about a Dominican nurse returning to her island home with her British husband.

The story was written while Albert was working for Dominica's Tropical Star newspaper.

He said: "That's where a lot of these short stories have come from."

"I came to England last year and I began sorting through things, looking for people to publish my work."

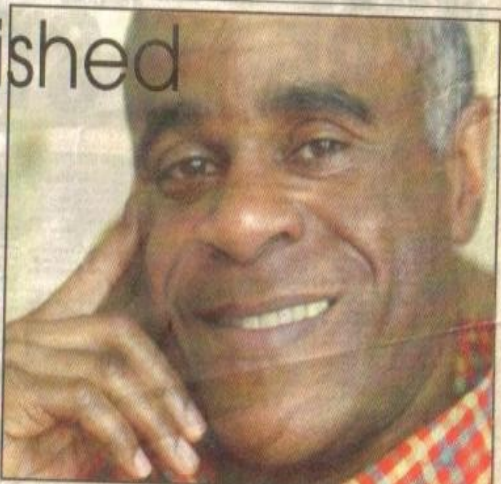
Albert was born in England, but left for the small Caribbean island of Dominica in 1972.

In 2000 he took a correspondence course in short story writing and journalism.

He has had three poetry collections published – 'Haunted Heritage and Other Stories' which will be released through Publishamerica.

Albert said: "They have an acquisitions process and if they think the book is marketable and saleable then you sign a contract with them, which I did in July."

Albert is now working on his first novel.



Crawley Observer 14, 2005

Can you help an Entrepreneur coming home to roost?



Albert Williams needs finance to launch a new magazine.

After getting nowhere with his search for employment 43-year-old, Albert Williams is excited about becoming self-employed. According to the poet, author and journalist, his vision of becoming a magazine publisher is now only a smart business plan away.

Williams born in the picturesque village of Emsworth, of Caribbean parentage, always wanted to be an entrepreneur, and is confident that his first class, glossy, magazine : UK-Caribbean, will now become a reality.

Interestingly, Albert's love for creative writing and journalism was ignited during the 32 years that he lived in the Caribbean and prepared him for his greatest creative challenge to date.

Albert migrated to The commonwealth of Dominica with his father in 1972 at the age of ten. There he demonstrated a keen eye for the entrepreneurial spirit, where he published several poetry magazines.

He even produced and presented a one-hour, literary radio program for the Dominica Writer's Guild (of which he is founder member) Albert was also one of several young persons who also founded the Frontline Cooperative Bookstore. In addition, he was then invited to join the Dominica's oldest and most read newspaper: The Chronicle as a full-time reporter and photographer.

His current project, to found his own publishing company, and to publish UK-Caribbean magazine, is born out of a deep understanding of the issues and aspirations that underlie the meaning of existence of the citizens of the two regions.

Albert remains a charismatic and focused individual, and enthusiastic about the future prospects of his idea. However, he now needs like minded individuals or organisations to inject funds into the concept. If this is you, why not contact Albert and help him complete this happy homecoming story.

<http://uk.geocities.com/albertscript2002/albert-williamsindex.html>
Telephone number 078 598 461 68 or
E-mail: albertscript2002@yahoo.com

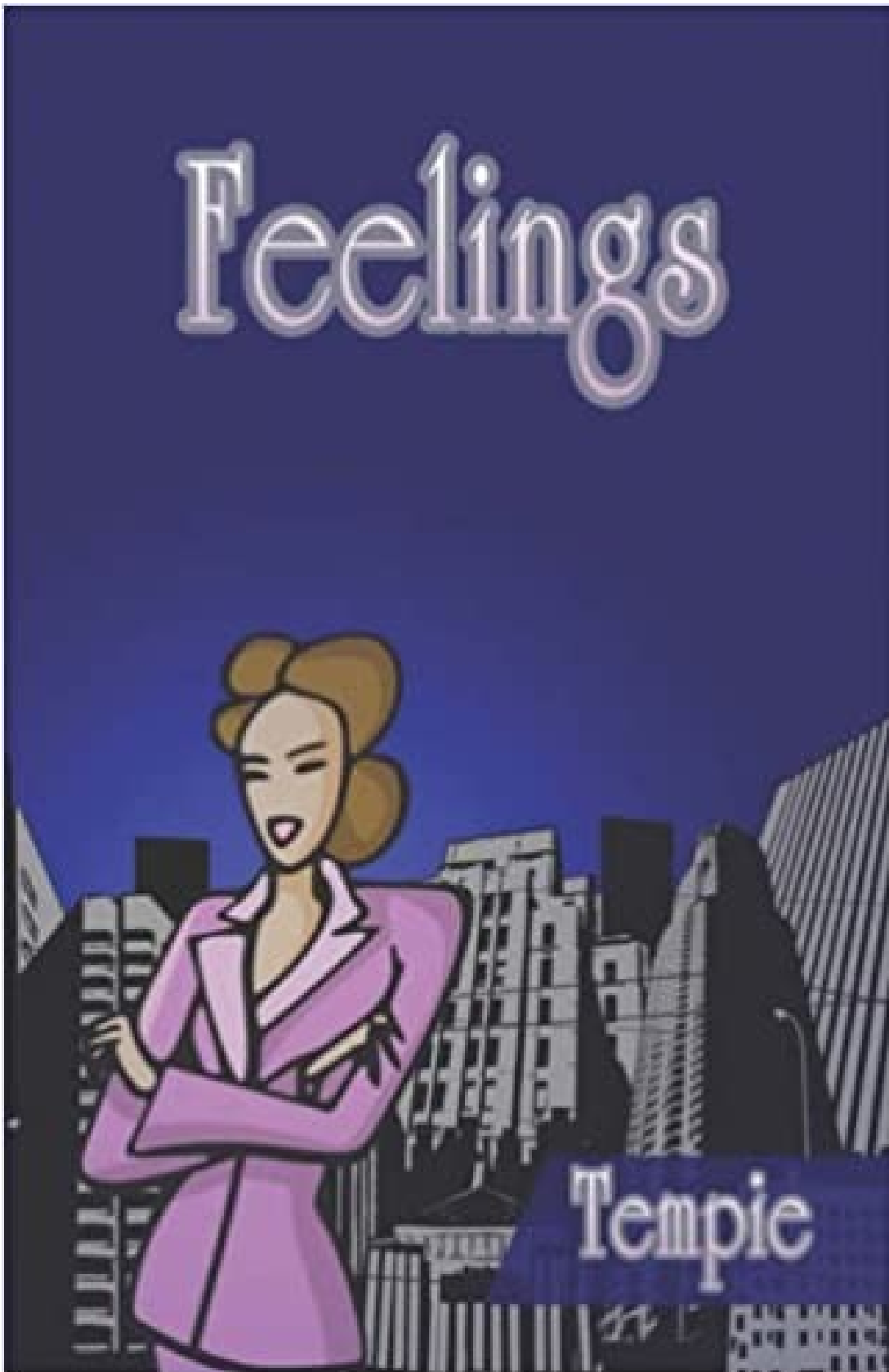
Entrepreneur's Motto: "I started out with nothing and still have most of it left!"

WWW.SYOB.CO.UK - SEPTEMBER 2005
RAISING THE MONEY
SEVENTEEN

Start you own business – September 2005

TEMPIE





On the message board, and struck up a friendship with another author on the message board. She had also recently had her book accepted by PA. Her name was Tempie and the title of her book is 'Feelings'. We began to chat regularly, and when her book was released, I

wrote a review. Over a few weeks, Tempie and I fell in love, and I invited her to the UK. She came and our friendship took off to new heights. She returned to the USA for a year, and when she returned we were married at the Crawley Town Hall on May 10, 2008.



Tempie signs the wedding register as I look on

In Tempie I found a soul mate and she and I were compatible in so many ways. We loved literature and photography, and we both were early adopters of information technology. Tempie's background included health care and cable television, and she was very successful in quickly setting up a number of book launches in her hometown of Memphis and around Mississippi.



Tempie at a book-signing

Tempie was delighted to be with me in the UK. We were both authors published under the same publisher, now under the same roof and married to each other. I couldn't have imagined a year ago that my life would have taken such an fortuitous direction. Tempie shared my passion for music, and although she knew nothing about Rastafari, she willing accepted the faith and later we would begin growing our dreadlocks together.



Tempie on a visit to Bognor Regis



Pigeons are delighted to see Tempie in Trafalgar Square, London

REVERBNATION

Tempie and I were very keen in using the web. After all, we had first meet each other virtually on our publisher's messagboard, and we continued our relationship, using back then mainly, Yahoo chat and later Skype, and of course email and airmail. We also subscribed Myspace and uploaded our songs to Reverbnation. During my teenage years, I had written dozens of songs on my guitar, including Honourable Natty Dread and I time is up which featured as poems in my first book of Honourable Natty Dread. You could not blame for being

enthusiastic optimistic. Although by now I was in my mid -forties, my youth spent in Dominica, here was I in a completely new era.



Tempie and I finding our sound

When we first began our courtship in January, 2005, I was living in Bognor Regis, it was also here that I signed the deal with Publishamerica to publish my book. I was on Job Seekers Allowance, and al also did spell with Zenith Staybrite as a telephone sales caller. I moved to Crawley in November, where I continued my online friendship with Tempie as pursued various options. one of which was to submit my name as a volunteer on the Crawley Homes Association's shadow board. The town hall was at the time desirous of handing over the housing and garage stock to a private association, and a committee was made up to select a number of Crawley Borough on the board of the new association.



Albert Williams holding a photo of Tempie at another book signing



Albert Williams

A tenant from Northgate, Albert has worked in security, welfare and journalism – allowing him to bring many different skills to the Shadow Board.

He is committed to making a useful contribution to the borough, prompting his decision to get involved with the proposed new landlord.

Albert has written and self-published three booklets of poetry and recently has had one book of short stories published by a traditional publisher. He is an excellent performance poet and workshop facilitator.

I also in 2006 landed a job as a security guard at Tesco Supermarket. I can still remember Tempie's face light up when she saw me in my uniform for the first time. During Tempie first visit, I can remember that while looking through an edition of Crawley Observer, we saw an advertisement for the recently launched FIAT range, Grande Punto. I told Tempie we are going to purchase this. I didn't even have a provisional license. Back then one could buy a vehicle on hire purchase, and by the time all the arrangements had been put in place, it was Tempie that drove the car to a garage that I rented while I continued with my driving lessons. I would pass the driving test in time before our wedding, and I was able to drive to us to the town hall and back for our wedding. With a brand new vehicle with 0 miles on delivery we would criss-cross the UK visiting more towns and cities of interest to us.



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